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THE  
PENNANT

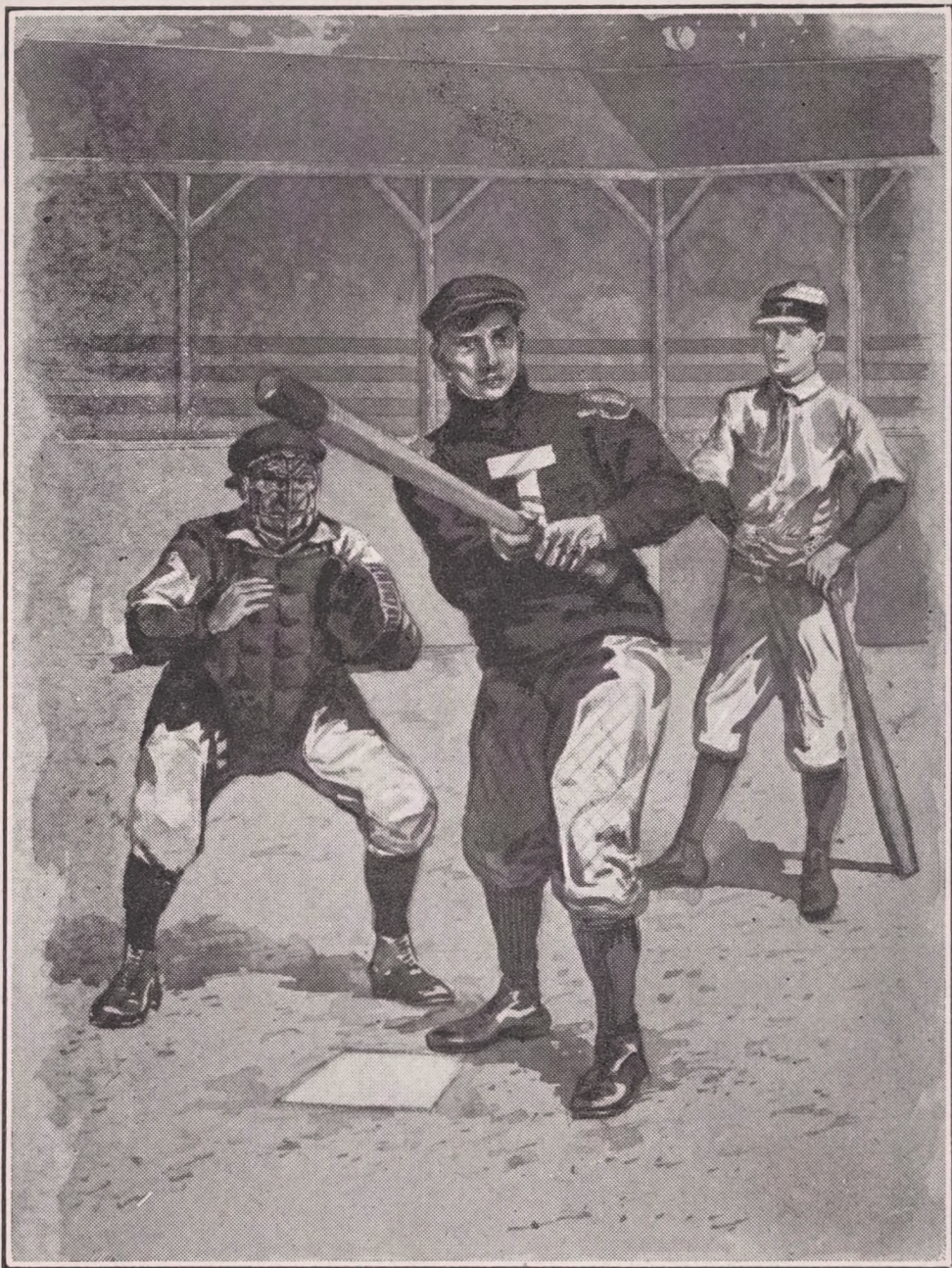












*“ The opposing batter now advanced to the plate ”*



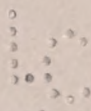
# THE PENNANT

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BY  
EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

Author of

"The Winner Series," "The Ward Hill Series"  
"The Blue and Buff Series," etc.



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## PREFACE

THE interest in young life does not seem to be limited to young people. The problems that our boys and girls are compelled to face are few, though they present themselves in many disguises. The solution of these problems cannot be found by proxy. The best those who would aid can do is to try to point out certain laws and results that are as unchanging as the sun. But the method of a generation ago of pointing a moral in order to adorn a tale is no longer possible or desirable. The boys, and those who write for them, alike rebel. The lesson must be *in* the story, not *after* it.

The incidents in this story were taken from life and, therefore, cannot be untrue to life. The many friends of "Ward Hill" have often urged me to write another story of school life. This at last I have tried to do in "The Pennant," looking at the same problems from a different point of view. The continued interest of my young readers has been my chief inspiration.

ELIZABETH, N. J.

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.







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# THE PENNANT

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## CHAPTER I

### ON SIX TOWN POND

HAVE you tried the fishing this summer?"

"No; I've been too busy on the farm. This is the first day I have had when I could get away."

"It looks like rain. Is that the reason why you've dropped the shovel and the hoe?"

"Partly. It's more though, for the two dollars a day you've agreed to pay me for rowing you over the pond. I can't pick that up on the farm, you know."

"You'll soon be a rich man if you don't look out. Ever thought what you'd do with all your money?"

"Yes; I've thought a good lot about it. Perhaps 'thinking' about it is as far as I'll ever get with it."

"How are you going to invest it?"

"I'd like to get enough to help me go to school."



Walter Borden sat quietly erect in the stern of the rude skiff in which he was seated, lazily holding a rod in his hands from which a long line was paid out in the hope that some stray pickerel in Six Town Pond might be tempted by the bait displayed.

A half-hour before the time when the conversation recorded above had taken place he and his companion, Dan Richards, had driven seven miles from the home of Walter's grandfather, for the day, which was to be devoted to fishing in the pond, that extended three miles in length and in places was a mile or more wide. The little body of water was well known in the region for the fish which were said to be found in its depths, and Walter was convinced that the reports were not exaggerated, for in numerous summers preceding the one when this story opens he had tested the fact with varying degrees of success.

Every summer Walter came from his home in New York to spend at least a part of his vacation on the farm of his Grandfather Sprague. The broad acres, the great roomy barns, the cattle and horses, the deep brook that sped swiftly through the pasture, even the old-fashioned farmhouse with its garret and its broad piazzas, to say nothing of the many low rooms with their numerous windows, had every one a place dear to Walter's heart. From his earliest recollections, here was the place where his summer days had been passed. So eager was he to come, that when he was only ten years old his



father and mother had yielded to his pleadings and seen him safely entrusted to the conductor and porter of the sleeping-car, and alone he had gone on the journey of three hundred miles to Rodman, the little village a half-mile distant from Grandfather Sprague's home. It is true this is the form which Walter took to describe the place, although an ordinary observer would have said that the Sprague farm was half a mile from the village.

Later in the summer Mrs. Borden came to join her boy and pay her annual visit to her father and mother. Her words of wonderment, when she arrived, at the change in her boy's appearance since he had left home did not vary much from year to year. The tanned cheeks, the firmer muscles, the keen appetite, that made Grandfather Sprague shake his head as the cook's johnny-cakes disappeared twice a day almost as silently as the dew from the shaded lawn, were an annual delight to Mrs. Borden.

"Beats all how much a boy can hold," Grandfather Sprague daily would say as he watched the hungry lad.

Those days were gone now, for Walter Borden was a well-grown muscular boy of sixteen. "I haven't a doubt that I can put you on the bed yet," laughed his grandfather, his eyes twinkling as he spoke.

"You'd better not try it," laughed Walter's mother, glancing in pride at her boy.



"Come on, grandfather," Walter would call out laughingly; "try it!"

"'Try it'!" retorted Grandfather Sprague. "I'm not going to 'try' it; I'm going to do it!"

"When?" laughed Walter.

"One time is as good as another."

"Do it now! Do it now!" retorted the lad.

"You're nothing but a little whipper-snapper. You don't weigh more than a hundred and fifty."

"How much do you weigh, grandfather?"

"Two hundred and ten."

"All right. You have the advantage in weight. I'll not count it though, if you'll put me on the bed."

"Don't try it, pa," spoke up Grandmother Sprague. "You might slip and break your leg."

"Or hurt his pride," laughed Walter, whose love and respect for his grandfather were almost as keen as was the old man's love for the stalwart lad.

"Pooh, ma," the old gentleman retorted a trifle testily. "You don't suppose I'm so old I can't take my own grandson across my lap and spank him as he deserves, do you?"

"You might if he would lie still," replied Mrs. Sprague dryly. "But you and I were born on the same day and so I know just how old you are. You are seventy-seven——"

"And almost as spry as ever I was," broke in her husband. "I don't feel a day older than when I was forty. The only thing that troubles me any is that I stub my toe more than I used to."



"You take my advice and don't bother with Walter."

"Well, to please you, ma, I'll give him a day of grace. But I give you fair warning," he would add turning to the laughing boy, "that to-morrow at ten-thirty I shall give you what you deserve."

"To-morrow at ten-thirty," brought a daily repetition of the scene and conversation and not yet had Grandfather Sprague found just the time for displaying his prowess. His deep love for Walter was a source of joy to his grandson, who almost revered his portly, jolly, devout grandfather. His happiest days were those spent on the farm, and next to them were the visits of his grandfather and grandmother to the city.

According to Grandfather Sprague, all the members of the family were in a conspiracy to "spoil the boy," that is, all except himself. He was for letting the boy know his proper place. But if anyone had ever heard of Grandfather Sprague refusing a request of Walter, or failing to be the first to herald his success in school or on the athletic field, he had held his peace so successfully that none had ever heard his testimony.

Every spot and creature on the farm were known to Walter. He had tramped in the woods, fished in the brooks, ridden the horses, driven the cows from the pasture to the barns—in fact, in former years the only moments when he had not been busy had been those when his tired little body was asleep.



The collie and the horse which had been given him brought Walter's life a little more closely into touch with animate things, but his chief interest aside from his grandfather's place was in Dan Richards, who lived with his widowed mother and his brother Tom—a year and a half older than Dan—on the little farm adjoining.

Dan's skill in making whistles of the willows, his unusual strength, his quiet bearing had appealed strongly to Walter in other days. Even now, when both were older and Dan's lack of money was as marked as was Walter's freedom in its use and disregard of its true value, there was a similar feeling of regard in Walter's heart. The dark eyes, the tall form, the quiet unassuming ways of Dan were still almost as strong in their appeal to Walter as were the undoubted possession of physical strength and skill which were Dan's. The quiet manner in which Dan had accepted his friend's offer to pay him for rowing on the pond had deceived Walter completely. His blue eyes, his light-brown hair, his well-knit muscular body—"stocky" Dan called him, were not in sharper contrast to Dan's physical characteristics than were their differences in mind and temper. The offer to "employ" his old friend had meant little to Walter. How much of an effort it had been for Dan to accept he never for a moment even suspected. Even his expression of surprise when he looked up hastily, as Dan explained how he hoped to invest his earn-



ings, did not have in it one glance of understanding. Dan and the little "Rockland Farm," which, with the best of care, provided only a scanty living for its owners, were almost inseparable in Walter's mind. That Dan had ambitions beyond the limits of his farm or even beyond the little village of Rodman had not once occurred to Walter.

"School, Dan?" he exclaimed in surprise as he looked at his companion.

"Yes," replied Dan quietly, without glancing at the fisherman.

"What put that into your head?"

"Haven't you ever heard of a fellow wanting to get an education?"

"Why yes, of course," said Walter, "but I hadn't thought——"

"Of me in that connection?" suggested Dan as his friend hesitated.

"I don't know why I shouldn't think of it," said Walter hastily.

"But the fact is you hadn't?"

"Yes, I suppose so. What are your plans?"

"I don't know that I have any very definite 'plans,' as you call them. Last year there was a young fellow from college that taught our school. I guess he put it into my head. He seemed to be interested, and gave me some lessons every night after I had finished my chores."

"In what?"

"Oh, in algebra and Latin."



"And you have been working on them?"

"A little. I had to be busy on the farm all day, and nights were the only times I had free."

"Where do you plan to go?"

"I had been thinking some of going to the Normal School at Jericho. That's only forty miles from here. It won't cost very much there, you know. If I can get a little money ahead, I'm going to try it anyhow," Dan said quietly.

"Going on to college?"

"I should like to. The hardest thing is to leave my mother and Tom to run the farm. They need me and I don't know that they really can get along without me."

"Don't they want you to go?"

"Yes. Mother says she'll sell or mortgage the farm and go with me, if Tom will go too. She'd get a few rooms and perhaps take a few boarders and help us that way."

"Your mother is all right."

"Don't I know that?"

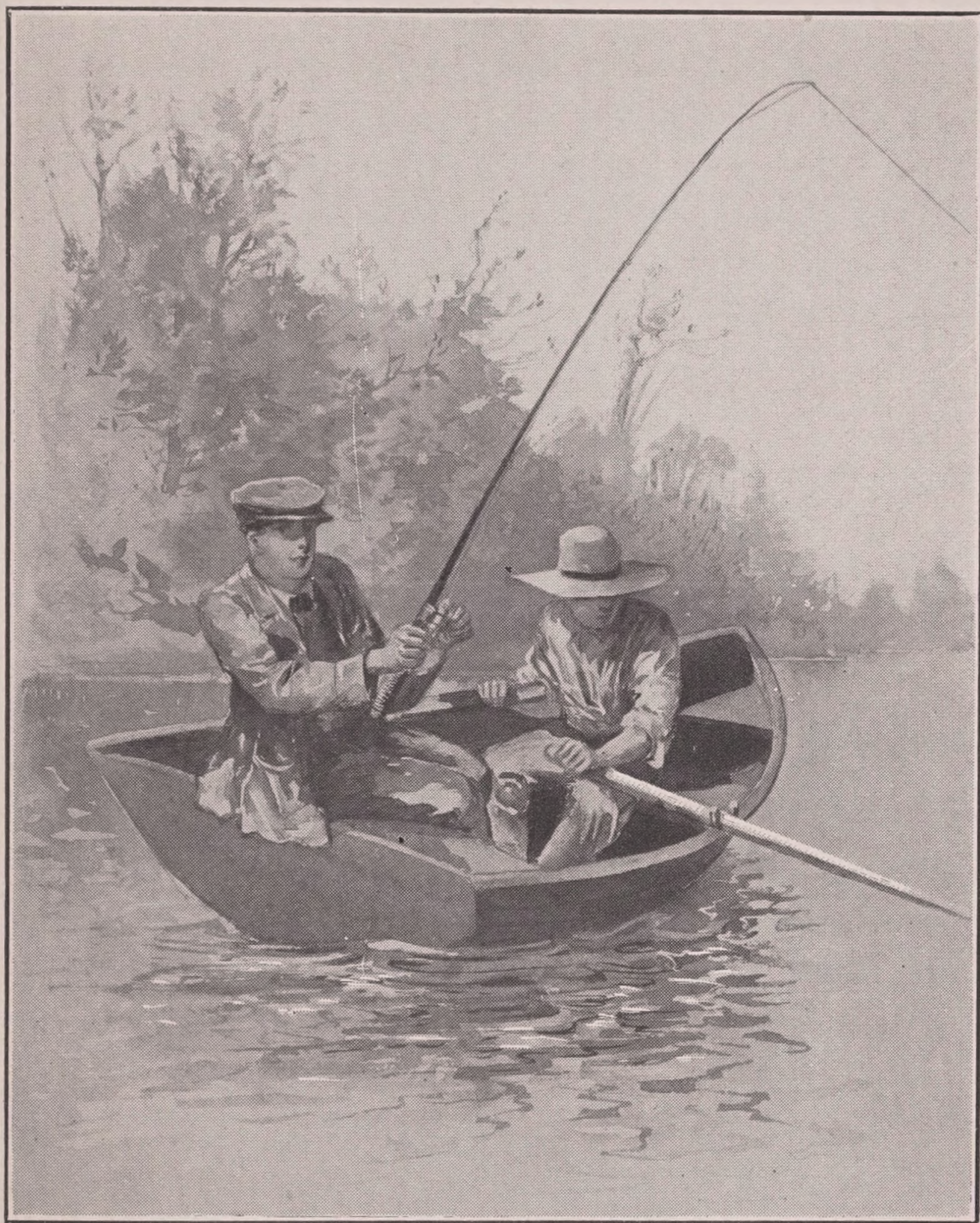
"You ought to, if any one does——"

"You've got a strike," broke in Dan quietly. "Better pay attention to your fishing, that is, if you want to get any fish."

Conversation ceased as Walter sharply yanked his rod. "The fish got away!" he exclaimed with chagrin a minute later.

"Of course," said Dan dryly. "What did you expect? You pulled the hook right out of his





*“ Conversation ceased as Walter sharply yanked his rod ”*

*Page 18*







mouth. You don't think a pickerel will hang on with his fins and tail, do you?"

"Show me how, Dan," said Walter humbly. "I believe I've forgotten how to do it."

"No, you haven't. You never knew how, so you haven't forgotten. Hold on! You've got another strike! Hand me your rod and I'll try to show you how to handle a strike."



## CHAPTER II

### DAN'S PROJECT

DAN took the light rod and instantly let out a few feet of the line. He dropped his oars as he did so and the skiff swung around before the gentle breeze that was blowing. Intently watching the line, he permitted the tip of the rod to drop back until it was even with the stern of the boat, and then with one strong yank he swung it back until it was again at a right angle with the skiff.

"Take your rod," he said quietly, as he handed it to his companion. "Your pickerel is hooked all right; now let me see you land it. Be careful of your slack," he added quickly, as Walter began to reel in swiftly.

The oars were again grasped by Dan, and he slowly sent the boat ahead, meanwhile watching his companion in the latter's efforts to land his prey. "It's a big fellow!" said Walter in his excitement as the contest continued. "It'll weigh six pounds! It pulls like a load of bricks! I didn't know there was a pickerel as big as that in Six Town Pond!"

"Be careful," said Dan in a low voice. "Let him run! Give him line or you'll tear the hook out



of his mouth! Not that way!" he added, as Walter permitted the struggling fish to make swiftly for the near-by weeds. "If you let him get among those weeds he won't stop to say good-bye."

'As Walter once more began to reel rapidly an expression of consternation swept over his face as he said, "It's gone! There isn't a bit of weight on the line! It must have got away."

"Reel in," commanded Dan.

"I am reeling, but——" Walter stopped abruptly as a savage pull upon his line interrupted his declaration.

The contest continued several minutes, neither of the boys speaking. Walter's excitement was intense, and he stood up in the skiff to enable him to look for the struggling pickerel.

"Sit down!" ordered Dan a trifle sharply.

"I can see better when I'm standing," replied Walter. "There it is!" he shouted as his victim came within sight. "It's a beauty! It'll weigh more than six pounds! It's the biggest pickerel I——"

"Look out! Don't let him touch the boat!" broke in Dan, as the huge pickerel made a sudden rush beneath the skiff. "There! You've lost it!" he added grimly, as the fish tore itself free from the hook and with a swift turn darted beyond the vision of the excited Walter.

"That's strange," muttered Walter, as in deep chagrin he resumed his seat. "I don't see how it



got away. You couldn't have hooked it very well in the first place, Dan."

The young oarsman smiled a trifle derisively as he said: "A good fisherman doesn't have to have a fish strapped and tied to land it. I told you not to stand up."

"What difference does standing make?"

"You have to balance yourself as well as handle the rod. Only an expert can do that. Let me have your line. Your bait is gone."

As Dan drew in the line and again baited the hook Walter laughed as he said: "Oh, well, Dan, I'll soon get the trick of it again. You must remember that we don't fish very much in the streets of New York."

"So I hear," quietly responded Dan as he handed back the fishing-rod.

"This time I'll be careful, Dan," continued Walter, as he resumed his seat and let out his line again, while his oarsman sent the skiff more swiftly ahead.

"You'll get it next time."

"Let us hope so. Dan, how is the Rodman nine this summer?"

"Pretty fair. We have a game to-morrow."

"Who is to be the victim?"

"I'll tell you later about that."

"What nine do you play?"

"The nine from Benson."

"Same team you played last summer?"

"Yes."



"Let me see; the score last year was thirty-seven to nineteen, wasn't it?" laughed Walter.

"Yes."

"What'll it be this year?"

"I'm no prophet."

"Seventy-four to thirty-eight?"

Dan smiled good-naturedly as he replied: "We'll have an umpire this year that can tell the difference between a foul ball and a bunt. There's a fellow staying at the Wright place that knows baseball like a book."

"Who is he?"

"Moulton."

"What Moulton?" asked Walter, interested at once.

"He's pitcher on one of the college nines."

"It isn't Moulton from Princeton, is it?"

"Yes."

"How long has he been here?"

"About three weeks."

"Great! He's one of the finest! He struck out sixteen men in his first game this year?"

"Did he?"

"He did that," said Walter, his interest becoming still more manifest. "He's one of the greatest college players ever known. The New Yorks offered him four thousand dollars a year to join their team."

"Well, he's going to umpire the game for us to-morrow."



"Good! Great! He'll be pretty sharp with you."

"All right."

"Who's to pitch for your nine?"

"I am."

"Who is to catch?"

"Tom."

"Your brother?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't think you'd have time to practise."

"We don't have much time."

"How long have you been pitching?"

"Three weeks."

"You played first base last year."

"Yes."

"What made you think you could pitch?"

"I don't know that I can. I'll tell you more about it to-morrow, after the game with Benson."

"It's a pity I didn't come up a little sooner. I might have given you a little coaching. Of course, I'm not a pitcher. I play short on the Tait School nine. But I know a little how it ought to be done, even if I can't do it myself."

"We have had a little coaching," said Dan quietly.

"Who has been coaching you?" laughed Walter.

"Moulton."

"What? The Princeton pitcher?"

"Yes."

"That's great!" exclaimed Walter, his enthusiasm returning in full measure. "How does he do it? When do you get the time?"



"He comes over to the house every night after supper."

"And Moulton has been showing you how to do it?"

"He has been trying. He has done his best. If I don't learn the fault isn't his, anyway."

"I wouldn't miss that game to-morrow for a fortune. I'm going to see how much you can do."

"Wouldn't you like to play short?"

"I'm your man!"

"I thought you'd want to, so I saved the position for you."

"That's good of you! I'll try not to disgrace—hold on, I've got another strike! I don't want to lose this fellow!"

Once more Dan swung the skiff around until it was broadside to the struggling fish. He was too wise to make any suggestions to his companion at such a time, though he quizzically watched his friend as the latter attempted to follow the directions that had been given him before. The pickerel was securely hooked and at last Walter managed to bring his victim near enough to the boat to enable Dan to secure it with the aid of a landing-net.

"It's only a little fellow!" exclaimed Walter in disgust, as he looked at the fish after it had been thrown upon the bottom of the boat. "It won't weigh more than a pound and a half. Not much like the big one that got away."

"That's a trick fish have," remarked Dan dryly,



as he once more resumed his task at the oars, after he had placed a fresh bait on the hook.

"But the one I lost was a big one!" persisted Walter.

"That's what I'm telling you. It will get bigger and bigger all the time. To-night when you go back to your grandfather's, that pickerel will weigh ten pounds at the very least. The weight increases as the square of the distance."

"That's all right, Dan," laughed Walter. "Have it your own way. You'll have to own up that I landed this fellow all right, anyway."

"It couldn't get away, it was hooked so well. You could have landed it with a block and tackle. It had swallowed the hook."

"Well, you just watch me next time."

An hour elapsed, however, without another strike. The summer sun had climbed high into the heaven and the waters of Six Town Pond were almost like glass. Walter's impatience increased as the time slowly passed. Even conversation ceased and at last Dan said:

"The water is almost too clear this morning, Walter. I'm afraid we sha'n't get many pickerel to-day. It's half past eleven," he added as he glanced at his watch. "Don't you think we'd better row over to the bluff and get a few perch for dinner?"

"I'm ready," responded Walter promptly. "Shall I reel in?"



"No; you might as well troll while we're crossing the pond. One never can tell, you know. By the way, Walter, is this a pond or a lake?"

"What's the difference? I always thought a pond was a small lake."

"A lake has an outlet; a pond doesn't. No, it's the other way."

"Then Ontario and Erie ought really to be called Ontario Pond and Erie Pond—they both have outlets."

"Here we are," replied Dan, as he rowed under the shadows of the high shore. "Now you'll have to show that you are a fisherman, Walter, or we sha'n't have any fish for dinner. Here, let me change your tackle," he added. In a brief time the change was made, and as Walter dropped his line into the water, Dan said: "I'll take this other pole and try my luck. When we get a half-dozen perch that will be enough and we'll go ashore. There's a stone fireplace up there among those cedars which we can use."

"There was one last summer. Is this the same one?"

"I guess so; it hasn't been disturbed. Now we'll see which will get the first perch," he added, as he dropped a line into the water on the opposite side of the boat.

The question was speedily settled, for in a brief time Dan landed two perch in quick succession.

"I don't see how you do it!" exclaimed Walter.



"Then I'm afraid I can't tell you," said Dan good-naturedly, making his perch captive in the end of the boat.

"It's just born in some people—hello! There! I've got a bite!" Walter's attention was quickly centered upon the fish he had hooked and a few minutes later, after he had succeeded in landing his prey, he exclaimed: "Mine is the biggest one yet! You can count yours if you want to. I'll just weigh mine."

"All right. You might weigh this fellow too while you are in the business," said Dan quietly, as he secured a perch much larger than his companion's. "Two more will give us all we want."

The two additional perch were speedily secured, Dan catching both of them, and then the skiff was sent ashore and the boys leaped out and drew the little boat far up on the sandy beach.



## CHAPTER III

### GREAT SNAKES

**Y**OU get some wood, Walter, and start a fire in the fireplace, while I am cleaning the fish and getting everything ready for dinner," said Dan, as the two boys, with the fish they had caught and the cooking utensils in their hands, started toward the grove on the bluff.

"Where'll I find an axe?"

"There's one in the skiff, but I don't believe you'll need it. Just pick up some of the dead wood; that's all we want."

"I'll have a roaring fire before you're ready," laughed Walter, as he turned among the trees. In a brief time he had collected sufficient wood, and a blazing fire was soon made in the rude fireplace. As he completed his task, Walter turned to his companion, who now was peeling some potatoes.

"Put the kettle on and fill it with water from the spring," Dan said. "If you are as hungry as I am, you won't want to lose much time. I'll have these potatoes boiling before you know it, if you are lively."

"I'm your man," laughed Walter, as he seized the kettle and at once went to the bubbling little



spring on the border of the woods. As soon as he returned he placed the kettle over the fire, resting it upon the flat stones. In a moment Dan dropped his potatoes into the water and then turned to his fish.

"They're great, Dan!" exclaimed Walter, as he saw his companion take the white-meated fish which had been cleaned and skinned and, after he had carefully placed them on the broiler, hold them over the blazing fire. "Strange, isn't it?" continued Walter. "Less than an hour ago those perch were swimming around in Six Town Pond as lively as crickets. Three hours afterward they are an important part of you and me. If I get a home run in the game to-morrow, probably that big perch that took my hook a few minutes ago will be what provided the force. One minute, a live fish chasing another smaller fish and trying to swallow it, and the next just changed into the force and nerve and muscle that knocks out a clean home run. Ever think about that, Dan?"

"Can't say that I have. You'd do better to drop poetry and set the table."

"You never get your feet off the earth, do you, Dan?" laughed Walter, as he turned to do as he was bidden.

"I've never seen a live man yet that could do that or lift himself by the straps of the boots he was wearing. Hurry up with that table!"

Walter took the table, which had been folded



and stored in the skiff, and placed it in the shade of a great tree near the fireplace. Two small camp-chairs were next taken from the boat and then the basket, in which a small tablecloth, some napkins, and some knives and forks had been arranged, was brought, and its contents spread upon the little table.

"Hurry up, Walter!" called Dan laughingly, as he faced his friend. "Dinner is almost ready. I get a cloud of smoke in my eyes every little while when the wind veers. That drives me away from the fire, so I lose time. You might get that basket under the stern seat—no, I left it in the buggy. It's the one that has the boiled eggs, the bread, pie, cake, and etceteras in it. Bring it on if you want to rush things a bit."

"I'll have it here in a minute!" called Walter, as he ran swiftly toward the shaded place where the buggy had been left. Near the buggy was old Prince, the horse which the boys had driven that morning. Walter could see the black flanks of the old horse among the trees and as he came nearer he was startled when Prince suddenly snorted as if he were in great fear and began to pull upon the strap as if he were doing his utmost to get away.

"Whoa, old fellow!" called Walter. "What's the trouble now? The flies biting you? Great——" he began as he came nearer the snorting animal and then abruptly stopped at the startling sight he saw. Crawling lazily over the grass toward the pond, which was only a few yards distant, Walter beheld



a snake larger than any he had ever seen out of captivity. As he stopped the great snake also stopped, and lifting its head gazed at the intruder, darting its forked tongue as if it were minded to drive its enemy from the place.

"Hi, Dan! Come over here! Come as fast as you can run! Bring the axe!" called Walter in his excitement. "Come on! Come on!"

Alarmed by the sharp call, Dan instantly dropped the cooking utensils in his hands and seizing the axe ran swiftly toward the spot where his friend was standing. Not a word did he speak until he stood by Walter's side and then in a whisper he asked, "What's wrong?"

"The biggest snake you ever saw has just crawled into the weeds down there on the shore!" said Walter excitedly, pointing as he spoke to the huge bed of reeds near the water. "It was as big around as an oar! It wasn't a foot less than seven feet long! Old Prince was scared out of his——"

Dan waited to hear no more, but grasping his axe, he ran swiftly toward the rushes where Walter had said the great reptile had crawled.

"Come back here, Dan!" called Walter, shouting to his friend. "You'll get bitten or squeezed! That thing is a terror! Come back here!"

But Dan did not heed the call of his excited companion. Parting the tall rushes, he stepped boldly into the midst of them and soon was concealed from





*“Walter beheld a snake”*







Walter's sight. Hesitating a moment, the latter looked about him for a weapon of some kind, and as none could be seen he hastily seized the whip in the buggy and then ran swiftly to the aid of his friend, whose danger he was convinced was great. Cautiously approaching the rushes, he called, "Where are you, Dan? I'm here to help! Where are you?"

No reply came from the marsh, though Walter was convinced that he could trace his friend's way by the movements of the tall rushes. Waiting a moment anxiously, he called again: "Where are you, Dan? Don't take any chances! Come back here and let the snake do as he pleases! Come on, Dan! Come on!"

"Go back and look after the dinner!" came a low call from the midst of the weeds.

"I'm not going to leave you here alone!" retorted Walter.

"If you want anything to eat go back and look after the fire. I don't want any help."

"Have you seen anything of the snake?"

No reply was made to the query and after delaying a brief time Walter walked slowly back to the place where the fire was burning. He repeatedly assured himself that he was not "nervous," but several times he was startled and stopped abruptly until he was able to decide whether a long dead branch in his pathway was really what it appeared to be. However, without any serious mishap he



arrived at the place he was seeking and instantly discovered that Dan's warning was most timely, for the fire had burned low and the frying-pan had tipped so that one of the perch had fallen into the ashes. Quickly righting the pan, he at once placed fresh wood upon the fire and soon had everything restored to its proper place. As he turned to look toward the marsh he saw his friend approaching, and it was manifest that he had not secured the snake.

"What's the trouble, Dan? Where's the snake?" inquired Walter.

"Got away," answered his friend.

"Did you see it?"

"Yes."

"How big is it?"

"Long as a fence rail."

"I told you it was. Did you ever see as big a one before?"

"No."

"Did it turn on you?"

"I thought it was going to, but it probably thought better of it, for it made for the deep water and I lost sight of it."

"What kind of a snake was it?"

"Just a plain water-snake, that's all."

"I shouldn't want it to bite me. I don't like snakes anyway. The sight of one makes my flesh creep."

"That's all foolishness. A snake is a mighty



pretty thing. I've taken little striped snakes up in my hands a good many times and examined them. Their marking is great, Walter!"

"I'm willing to take your word for it!"

"You don't have to, for you can see for yourself. This big fellow might put up a good fight if he was cornered, but I don't believe he would touch anyone if he was left alone."

"He scared old Prince all right."

"Well, he was something of a snake, but he wouldn't touch a live animal unless it was a frog or a squirrel."

"Eats dead fish, doesn't he?"

"Yes; you don't eat live ones, do you?"

"Not if I can help it. There, I'm glad he's gone. Think there are any more like him around here?"

"Some snakes go in pairs."

"Do they?" inquired Walter, glancing anxiously about him as he spoke, an action that brought a trace of a smile to Dan's face. "I'm not afraid," said Walter hastily, as he noticed the expression on his friend's face. "I just don't like their company, that's all. Are there many around here?"

"I guess if you should walk up the beach to those flat rocks yonder you'd find plenty of them."

"Any here?"

"I guess not. Most too cool here. Snakes like warm spots."

"Maybe the fire will draw them, then."

"You needn't be afraid."



"I'm not 'afraid,' I tell you. I just don't like the crawling things!"

"Well, never mind. We'll set the table now. I guess everything is ready."

Quickly the two boys placed their dinner on the little table. The smoking potatoes, the fish browned and hot, the various tempting viands which Grandmother Sprague had provided made a great display, and for a time conversation ceased, as both boys did full justice to the repast. Overhead the spreading branches of the huge chestnut trees provided ample shade. Before them were the waters of the pond shining and shimmering under the rays of the noontide heat. On the opposite shore men busy in the fields could be seen and over all was the glory of the perfect summer day.

"This is the way to live, Dan!" said Walter at last. "Why don't more people try it?"

"Probably they are too busy trying to get an income."

"That's all right. My father says it's a great thing for a man to learn to live within his income. He's trying to teach me how to keep inside of my allowance."

"I suppose that's so," said Dan a little dryly, "but to me it has always seemed as if there was something better than that."

"Better than living inside of one's income?"

"Yes."

"What's that?"



"Learning how to live without an income."

"I hadn't thought of that," laughed Walter. "I suppose it's true."

"It is, when you are wanting to do what I'm going to try."

"You mean working your way through school and college?"

"That's just what I mean."

"A good many have done it," suggested Walter lightly.

"Yes, I hear that is so, but I've heard too that a great many people die every year. I don't know that that fact makes dying any easier for the man when his own time comes."

"What's the trouble, Dan? Did the big snake scare you?"

"No."

"What is it then?"

"I'm thinking of that home run you're going to make to-morrow."

"I'll do my best."

"We'll need it."

"Have they a good nine?"

"I'll tell you more about that after the game."

"You're the king-pin, Dan. If you have a good head on your shoulders——"

"Yes; I've noticed that it's the man with a head that gets ahead."

"You'll do," laughed Walter, leaping to his feet as he spoke. "What's next?"



## CHAPTER IV

## THE REWARD OF PATIENCE

THE 'next thing' is to wash these dishes and put them back in the baskets where they belong."

"What's the use?" drawled Walter lazily.

"Some day we'll want to use them again."

"Use them, then; I don't object."

"But you'll want them clean."

"They were clean enough just now, weren't they? You put some potato on the plate on which I'd been eating potato and fish, didn't you? I didn't find any fault, did I?"

"I didn't notice any very vociferous complaint."

"Of course you didn't. Well, if a plate is clean enough to keep on eating from, I don't see any use in bothering with it."

"You mean that dishes that are clean enough to stop eating on are clean enough to begin with again?" laughed Dan.

"You've struck the nail on the head the first time."

"That may do in New York. It won't do here."

"It's just a fad, that's all," asserted Walter.

"It's a fashion and nothing more."



"You can explain it to your Grandmother Sprague when we go home, but I don't care to be there when she expresses her opinion, that is, if I happen to be the one who has not done his work as he ought to."

"She has some rather strong ideas on that subject," admitted Walter demurely. "I'm afraid she's a little prejudiced. She has the boards on the kitchen floor scoured with soap and water and sand till they fairly glisten. I said to her the other day: 'Grandmother, don't you really think there are some things in life that are more important than just keeping clean a few old pine boards in the floor of your kitchen?'"

"What did she say?" inquired Dan, smiling as he spoke. "Your grandmother has the reputation of being one of the best housekeepers in the county."

"She didn't say much; but, somehow, I didn't stay long to show her how mistaken she was. She just emptied a bucket of water on the floor where I was standing and I fled."

"You didn't make any mistake in that. Now then, I'll have to wash these dishes, and it's time I began," said Dan, as he leaped to his feet and prepared for his task.

"Oh, well, if you are set upon it, I suppose I'll have to help; but honestly, Dan, I don't see any reason in it."

"You don't have to help. You pay me for my time, you know."



"That's all right. I'm going to do my share."

"Come on then, if you mean it."

The dishes speedily were carried to the spring and as both boys worked rapidly the disagreeable duty was quickly completed.

"There! Now if you feel better we can try the fishing again," said Walter, as he and his friend returned to the shaded place where the table had been set.

"I'm afraid there isn't much use in trolling now," said Dan, as he looked over the still and shining waters of the pond.

"Why not?"

"It's too warm and still. The pickerel make for the cooler places when the sun is as warm as it is now."

"Then we can go to those 'cooler places' if that is where the fish go, can't we? A fellow ought to use his head when he's fishing, just the same as he does when he's playing ball."

"It isn't his head—it's his oars," explained Dan. "We simply can't get into the places where the pickerel hide. Besides, they won't bite much till the water is cooler."

"I can't understand that any more than I can about the dishes we just washed. A pickerel is always hungry, isn't he? Well, if he is always hungry, then he'll eat always, won't he?"

"No."

"Why won't he?"



"I guess you'll have to go to him to get your information."

"That's what I want to do."

"All right. We'll try the trolling again if you like."

"Pretty soon," replied Walter, whose desire for an argument was keener than his wish to be out on the water under the burning sun. "Just now I'm interested in that flicker. What does he make all that noise for?"

"He's after the worms in that dead tree where he's hammering."

"A bird is a cruel animal."

"How's that?"

"Why, he'll smash and hammer a poor little worm or a bug he catches till there isn't a spark of life left. Oh, I don't believe in harming the birds," Walter hastily added as he saw a look of surprise on Dan's face. "It isn't that. Only when I hear so much about saving the birds, I can't help thinking of the poor little grubs and bugs his birdship doesn't have any mercy for. See? Why don't we try to save the bugs and worms as well as the birds?"

"If you lived on a farm you'd know the reason why."

"What is it?"

"They kill the crops."

"So we kill them because they affect our pockets. Is that it?"

"I guess it is."



"Then it isn't wrong to kill things that take what we want. It's only wrong to kill what doesn't interfere with our plans."

"Have it your own way," said Dan, somewhat puzzled by his friend's apparent seriousness. "My conscience doesn't trouble me when I kill the grasshoppers and——"

"And yet the grasshopper is a wonderful creature. He makes his music with his hind legs."

"Who told you that?" sniffed Dan scornfully.

"Everybody knows it—unless he lives in the country."

"I guess that is the kind of talk you hear on Broadway."

"It's true, no matter where you hear it."

"You say it is; that's why you think it's so."

"No, sir. I say it because it is true, Dan. What does a squirrel do in the winter? Does he go to sleep the way the bears do, or does he——"

"I guess he does," broke in Dan. "You can ask more questions than a four-year-old boy."

"But you don't answer me. If I lived all the year where you do I'd find out some of these things."

"That's all right. It's a good way."

"Of course it is."

"Who printed the first newspaper in New York?"

"I don't know. Do you?"

"I do. It was William Bradford. He estab-



lished the first printing-press in New York in 1693. There's a tablet to his memory at the Cotton Exchange. Who was the mayor of New York when the present City Hall was built?"

"I give it up. Can you tell?"

"Yes, sir. DeWitt Clinton. Where can one find statues of Franklin and Greeley in New York City?"

"I know that—Printing House Square," laughed Walter.

"Good. What is Franklin holding in his hand?"

"I give it up. What is it?"

"A copy of his first newspaper—'The Pennsylvanian.' Where is the Peter Cooper pear tree?"

"Let's go out on the pond and try the pickerel."

"All right; only the next time you suggest that I ought to know all about the habits of the squirrels and the bugs, I'm going to ask you about Minetta Creek——"

"What's that?"

"That is the name of the little creek in Greenwich village——"

"You know a lot, Dan. I guess you've got me all right. I won't say anything more about a fellow finding out what is going on where he lives until I learn a little more about my own town. Where did you find all this out—I mean the things you're telling me?"

"I read about them, same as you read about grasshoppers."



"Come on," said Walter, rising as he spoke. "Look out for snakes, Dan."

The great snake was not seen as the two boys once more sought their boat and in a brief time resumed their trolling. Three hours passed and Walter seldom had a strike. "You're right, Dan," he said at last; "there isn't a hungry pickerel in the pond."

"Too hot," remarked Dan quietly.

"Yes, I know that's what you said. Perhaps we'd better quit. We've a good seven miles to go—back to my grandfather's."

"This is the best time in the day for fishing."

"You have your milking to do. I don't want to keep you from that."

"My brother will look after the chores to-night. You've paid for this day and it belongs to you if you want it."

"All right," laughed Walter. "You row along the edge of those weeds yonder and by the time we get back to the place where Prince is I'm sure I'll have had enough."

"Just as you say," said Dan, as he rowed the skiff toward the long stretch of weeds to which his companion had pointed. "Now look sharp," he added as they drew near the reeds. "You've got the right time and you've got your pickerel!" he added sharply as there came a savage tug on Walter's line. "It's a beauty!" he shouted as a huge fish leaped from the water a hundred feet in the



rear of the boat. "Give him your line! Let him have the bait! Don't yank it out of his mouth!"

Walter did not respond as he did his utmost to follow his friend's instructions. "Now!" shouted Dan, "give him a quick, sharp, hard yank! That's right. You've hooked him! Now look out that he doesn't get any slack! Reel in slowly! If he tries to run let him have line, only don't take your thumb off the reel!"

The tip of Walter's rod was suddenly drawn under the water and the boy in his excitement started to rise from his seat. "Sit down!" ordered Dan. "Don't let him drag your rod under, whatever you do! That's no way to fish! Keep a good tight line and your rod out of the water!"

"Who's doing this?" inquired Walter testily.

"I'm trying to have you do it," retorted Dan.

"Well, let me do it then! I'm going to save or lose this pickerel all by myself! You look after your oars——"

"Good!" broke in Dan good-naturedly. "Now you're talking like a fisherman. I'll keep the skiff broadside on and you can do the rest."

Silence followed and the contest continued. Excited as Walter was, he nevertheless was mindful of his every act. Again and again he reeled the huge fish near the boat, only to have the pickerel, which was fighting for its life, dart swiftly away. The reel "sang," but Walter, mindful now of the care and skill required, did not for a moment relax



his vigilance. Steadily and cautiously he reeled his victim back toward the boat, until at last the huge pickerel was plainly to be seen.

"It's a monster!" exclaimed Walter excitedly, as he obtained his first view of the great fish. "It's the biggest pickerel I ever saw."

"Tire him out," said Dan quietly. "It's your only chance."

Once more the fish, as it saw the occupants of the skiff, darted swiftly away, but Walter was wiser now, as well as more careful, and giving his victim a free line he did not begin to reel again until the pull ceased upon his line. His excitement redoubled, but Dan smiled approvingly as he marked his friend's caution. Three times more the desperate pickerel darted away, but the run was shorter each time and there was less resistance each successive time that the young fisherman reeled in his victim.

"Bring him alongside now," directed Dan. "Be careful! If he touches the boat with his tail he'll get a purchase and break away. There! That's right! I'll have to use a gaff on him, the net is too small. Good! That's exactly where I want him!"

Taking his gaff, Dan suddenly thrust it under the pickerel and then with one quick, strong pull brought the great fish into the skiff. Despite the floppings and flounderings of the safely landed fish, Dan gave it one hard blow with a short hickory club and its struggles were ended.

"That's what I always do," he explained. "I



don't want to keep a fish in misery ; and, besides, it's better eating if killed quickly."

"Dan! Dan! Look there!" abruptly exclaimed Walter in a low voice, and as his companion looked up, instantly he saw what had aroused the attention of his companion. Not more than five yards away, and swimming near the border of the rushes, was the huge snake which Walter had seen a few hours previous to this time.



## CHAPTER V

### PREPARATION

**G**ET it, Dan!" shouted Walter. "Use your oar! Hit it!"

The young oarsman obediently swung the skiff about and started swiftly in pursuit of the reptile, but before the weeds were gained the snake disappeared and a further search failed to reveal its presence.

"Too bad, Walter," said Dan lightly. "What did you want of it?"

"Why, I'd have the skin tanned or stuffed and hang it on the wall of my room in school."

"What for?"

"'What for?' For an ornament."

"Do the boys in the Tait School think snakes are ornamental?"

"Well, it would be interesting anyway. But it's gone now and there's no use in talking about it any more. You weren't quick enough, Dan."

"No, I wasn't quick enough, that's a fact. A fellow would have to be about as lively as a flash of lightning to catch one of those fellows on the water."

"Did you ever see as big a one as that was?"

"Never."



"Sure it was a water-snake, Dan?"

"Yes. I've seen the time early in the month when a fellow walking along the shore of Six Town Pond would stir up hundreds of these fellows—little chaps a good many of them. The last time I was here—and that is more than a year ago—I saw a lively fight between a water-snake and a brown thrush."

"Which won? What were they fighting about?"

"I don't know, though I suspect that the snake had been robbing the thrush's nest. Probably had stolen the eggs or had swallowed the young ones. The old bird was screaming and flying at the snake's eyes and head, while his snakeship was doing his best to get back to the water. He'd crawl a few feet as lively as he could go and then he'd have to stop and defend himself when the thrush would get in some fine work. It was a lively tilt, let me tell you."

"Did the snake get away?"

"Yes; though I'm sure he had a headache."

"We'll come back and get this fellow!" said Walter eagerly. "Why can't we come tomorrow?"

"Because we're both to play ball."

"So we are," laughed Walter. "That's the first time I ever forgot about a ball game, but I certainly would like to have that skin. Dan, shall we try for any more pickerel?"

"That's for you to say."



Walter hesitated a moment before he said: "I'm sure I could get some more. It's just the right time of day, and now that I've learned just how to land the big fellows—— You needn't laugh," he broke in abruptly as a trace of a smile appeared on Dan's face. "Didn't I play this last pickerel I caught all right? It didn't get away anyhow."

"No, it didn't because it couldn't."

"Why did you keep telling me not to give it any slack then? If there wasn't any danger of losing it what difference did it make what I did?"

"I couldn't see then how well it was hooked."

"It was hooked all right."

"It certainly was. A yoke of oxen might have hauled it ashore and there wouldn't have been a chance for the pickerel."

"Well, it's a beauty anyway," said Walter proudly as he glanced down at the great fish on the bottom of the skiff. "What will it weigh, Dan?"

"It 'will' weigh nine or ten pounds and get heavier every time you tell how you caught it," replied Dan with a smile.

"No. Tell me honestly what you think it weighs now."

"It may tip the scales at eight pounds."

"More than that!" asserted Walter confidently. "Dan, I'd like to stay and get two or three more like this fellow, but I guess we'd better start for home. It'll be dark before we get there, even if we start right away."



"All right," assented Dan promptly, as he instantly began to row toward the landing-place.

"We'll come back for the snake and some more of those big pickerel some other time."

"They'll keep," said Dan shortly.

Old Prince, with a whinny, greeted the return of the boys. In a brief time the skiff was placed in the little boat-house on the shore, the rods and various belongings were put into the buggy, and last of all the big pickerel was wrapped in a bag and covered with a cloth under the seat.

"Some people count the fish they catch; others weigh them," said Walter with a laugh as the homeward journey was begun.

"Yes, I guess that's so," assented Dan. "Sometimes there seems to be a great deal of difficulty with the scales though."

"There won't be this time." Eight pounds, Dan. Don't forget that. Be sure you don't."

"I'm not likely to forget it—when you are anywhere near."

"Never mind. I'll take all the responsibility. Tell me about the game to-morrow."

"I can tell you better after to-morrow. I can't weigh fish before I have anything to weigh them with and I can't tell you about a game before it's played."

"You're a great chap, Dan!" laughed Walter. "I'm afraid you haven't any imagination."

"What's that?"



"Oh, it's the ability to see things—a little different from what they really are."

"I see. I guess old Si Slater, the harness-maker, must have more imagination, as you call it, than any other man in——"

"Why, what makes you think he has?"

"He never has been known to tell anything as it is. He sees things a little different from what they really are. You say that's 'imagination.' Perhaps it is, but we poor chaps up here in the country don't call it by that name exactly."

"What do you call it?" inquired Walter laughingly.

"We just say Si Slater is the biggest liar in seven counties."

"Is Si as fat as ever? I haven't seen him since I came."

"Fatter. You'll see him to-morrow—and hear him too."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say."

"Is Si a 'rooter'?"

"I guess so, though I'm sure I don't know what a 'rooter' is."

"Why, a 'rooter' is a wild 'fan.'"

"Glad to hear it," said Dan dryly. "While you are about it you might explain what a 'wild fan' is."

"I didn't say a 'wild fan.' I said a 'fan' that is wild. A fan is a baseball enthusiast—one that



takes in all the games. A 'rooter' is one that yells for his team——"

"I see. I guess you can rely on Si's yelling all right, and on his attendance too. You'll know it if he is there."

"Know anything about the other nine, Dan?"

"Nothing except that they haven't lost a game this summer."

"How many have they played?"

"Five."

"You going to pitch?"

"At the start. If they drive me out of the box we'll have to call on you or someone else."

"I'll keep. I regularly play short, but I can pitch a little. If I could only curve a baseball the way I can a tennis ball I'd fool the batter every time. What does Moulton say about your work?"

"He doesn't say much."

"Oh, well, I understand he's a quiet fellow anyway."

"He is."

"Has he found much fault with your work?"

"No. He doesn't say much about it, as I told you."

"Probably he thinks you are doing all right or he would say so," said Walter, a little condescending in his manner. "You go ahead and try it tomorrow and if you fall down I'll see what I can do."

It was late when the boys arrived at the place they were seeking and their coming was announced



by Walter's shouts. When his grandfather came out of the house to greet the young fishermen the huge pickerel was displayed and the quiet comments of his grandfather were highly pleasing to the elated Walter. As he turned to say good night to his companion he again referred to the game of the morrow. "Don't you be anxious, Dan. You start in with your pitching and just remember that if the Benson nine finds your curves you can rely on me to help you out."

"That's all right, Walter," replied Dan quietly.

"The game is at three?"

"Yes."

"I'll be over on time."

"Good night."

"Good night, Dan," responded Walter as he entered the house.

Long before the time of the game on the following day Walter was on the field. Dressed in the uniform of his school nine, he was aware of the contrast between his neat, well-fitting suit and the quaint uniforms of the players who were on the ground. A smile of satisfaction and a slight deepening of his condescending manner were perhaps not unnatural in view of the appearance of the two nines. On each there were two or three who had no uniforms at all.

"Goin' to play with our nine?"

Walter turned as the question was asked, and



found himself face to face with Si Slater, the village harness-maker. Si's round face was glowing with interest and his fat body was perspiring in spite of his continued fanning with his straw hat of broad brim.

"Yes, I thought I would help the fellows out," replied Walter, with a laugh.

"All right. Ye'll have t' go some t' keep up with Dan an' Tom Richards. They're the best ball players in the whole county."

"Are they?"

"You're right they be. I've seen Dan knock a ball 'most forty rod."

"I hope he'll do it this afternoon."

"He will if he gets half a chance. I guess maybe you've played ball before, from th' looks o' those clothes ye're wearin'."

"Yes. I am on the school nine."

"Ye don't say! Well, do your prettiest! We don't want them Benson chaps to go home crowin' over us."

"We'll try not to let them do that."

"Hi! Look at that, will ye!" shouted the harness-maker as he slapped his hands on his fat thighs and pointed to a ball which Dan, who was batting flies for his fielders, had sent far over the heads of the scattered field. "I've wondered a heap o' times why the New Yorks didn't send up here for Dan. I guess he could give 'em all some points on the game!"



"Have you ever seen the New Yorks play?"

"No; I can't say 't I have. I was talkin' t' Dan a spell ago an' I suggested that he should send word for 'em t' come up here and have a game. I guess they'd open their eyes when they see Tom and Dan."

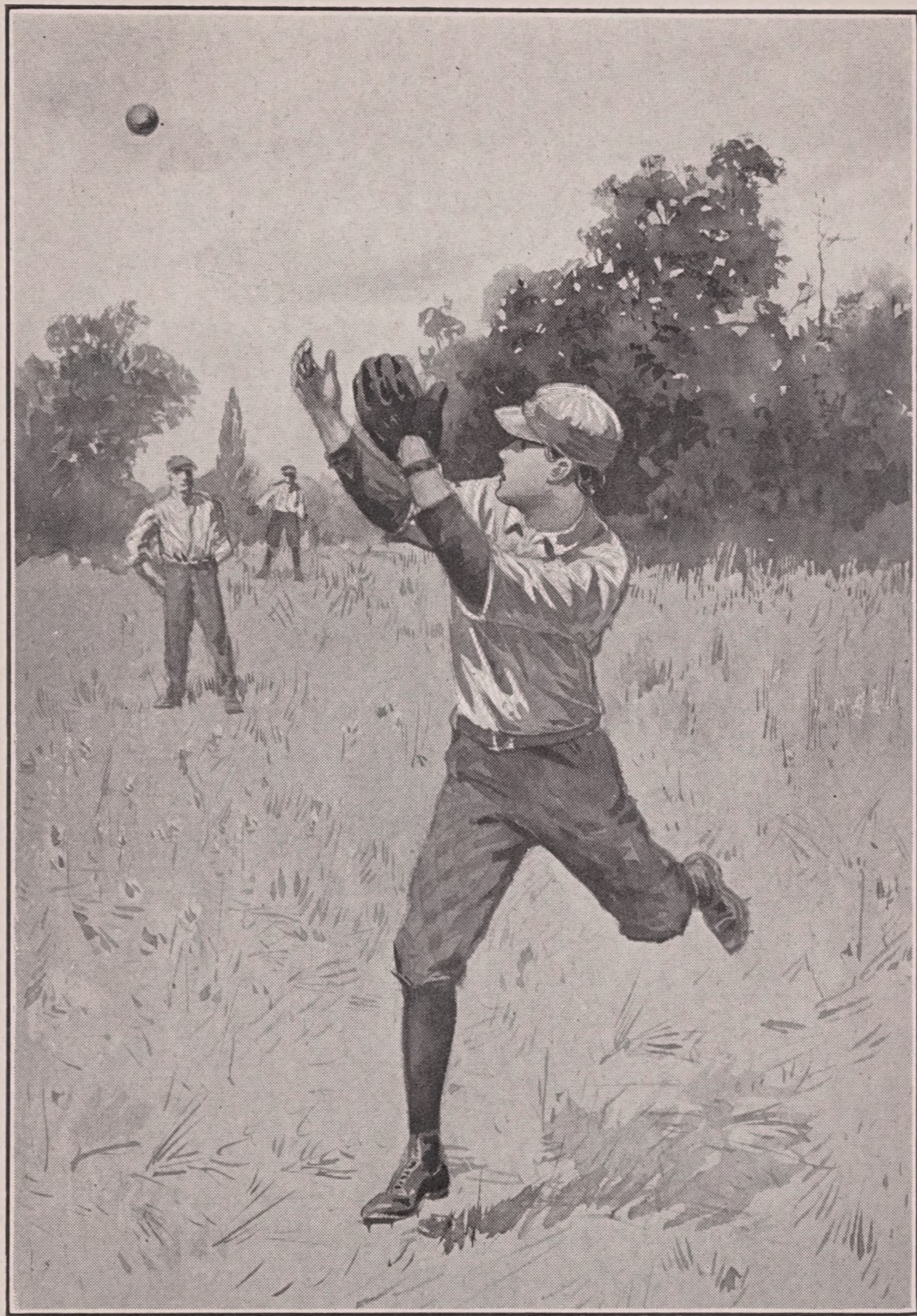
"What did Dan say?" inquired Walter quizzically.

"Nothin'. He isn't much o' a talker, Dan isn't."

"I shall be interested to-day in watching him."

"Don't ye watch him too much. Ye want t' keep both eyes on yer own job. Hi! Hi! Hi!" roared the enthusiastic Si as Dan lifted another high fly. "That's a pretty one. That's th' ticket, Dan!" The harness-maker doubled his noisy applause and Walter turned to take his place as short-stop in the preliminary practice. He smiled as he saw that the diamond was laid out in an ordinary pasture. The lines had not been cut in the turf, and even the pitcher's box was on the dry sward, indicated by chalk marks. As he looked about him he saw that the players were a brown and sturdy lot, but their somewhat awkward attempts to stop the ball brought once more a smile of condescension to his face. He laughed as he recalled Si Slater's suggestion as to a game with the New Yorks, but in a brief time he was busied in his own practice.





*“He was busied in his own practice”*

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## CHAPTER VI

## THE GAME

WHEN at last Walter and the Rodman nine came in from the field in order that the Benson players might have their share in the preliminary practice he laughed as he looked at the crowd that had assembled to watch the game. It was not much like the well-dressed assemblage that he knew was keenly watching every member of the nine when the Tait School played its great rival the Military Academy at Franklin. Automobiles then were regularly arranged back of the outfielders, the grandstand was gay with colors, and the cheers and songs, led by appointed leaders, broke in sharply on the tense silence that followed certain plays. Here, however, it was a motley crowd. Small boys were perched in the adjoining trees, awkward-appearing vehicles were standing here and there about the field, men with broad-brimmed straw hats and some with their trousers tucked inside of the tops of their high boots were eagerly watching the members of the two nines. If Walter was amused his feeling was not unkind, but the sight was so different from any he had ever seen before that perhaps his feeling was not unnatural.



Moulton now stepped forward and summoned the rival captains. As Dan turned away from the brief interview he waved his hand as a signal for his players to take the field, when Walter and the other members of the Rodman nine ran to their various positions in the field. The ball at last was thrown to Dan, and as the umpire called "play ball" the game was about to begin. Dan was very deliberate as he took the ball, rolled it in the dust a moment, then stepped into the pitcher's box and drew back his arm.

"Strike!" called Moulton, as the ball lodged in Tom Richard's hands.

"That's the way, Dan!" called Walter from his position of short-stop.

Ignoring the encouragement of his friend Dan sent in a slow ball, at which the batter lunged heavily, but failed to hit. A laugh arose from the Rodman supporters at the ludicrous attempt of the batter. Before the latter had fully recovered, Dan sent a swift ball directly over the plate and Moulton called the third strike.

"That fellow's out!" Walter heard the harness-maker shout gleefully.

"You're right, Si!" responded another Rodman supporter. "Better give that fellow a pine log for a bat!"

"Barn door'd be better!" roared Silas. "They can't touch Dan!" Walter turned to look at Dan, who now was facing the second member of the



opposing nine. The pitcher's manner still was as quiet as if he was unaware of the noisy approval of his supporters. "Keep it up, Dan," said Walter in a low voice.

Swinging his long arms, Dan for an instant turned his back to the batter, and then in a moment resuming his position he sent the ball in with all his strength. So sudden was his movement that the Benson player was unable to dodge the ball and was struck with its full force upon his left shoulder. Howling with pain he clapped one hand upon the wounded spot and began to dance excitedly about the home plate. "Ou-u-ch!" he cried. "Jiminy! that hurt!"

"Take your base!" ordered Moulton.

"Can't ye give a feller a chance t' git his breath?" demanded the unfortunate batsman indignantly.

"Take your base," said Moulton again in a low voice.

Grumbling and still twisting and rubbing the wounded shoulder the runner slowly made his way to the first base.

"You've got them scared, Dan," called Walter encouragingly. "Keep it up!" Dan did not glance at his friend as he once more faced the batter. Suddenly whirling about he threw the ball with terrific speed to the first-baseman, who touched the startled Benson player before the latter was fully aware of his peril.

"He's out!" called Moulton sharply.



"He had his foot in the way! He kept me off the base!" angrily shouted the runner.

The umpire did not even glance at the player as the angry protest was heard. "Batter up!" he said quietly.

"But I'm tellin' ye I ain't out," again called the disgruntled Benson player. "He had his foot——"

"You're out!" interrupted Moulton quietly. Then, ignoring the player, who at last with many mutterings and shakings of his head slowly rejoined his comrades, he was again watching the pitcher.

"Strike one!" he called as Dan sent a slow ball over the plate.

"Ball one!" he added a moment later.

"Strike two!" was his next announcement.

"Foul ball!" came the verdict, as the batter sent the ball far back over the catcher's head.

"You're out!" Moulton quietly said as the next ball came in swiftly.

"'Twasn't over the plate!" protested the Benson player loudly, as he flung his bat in anger upon the ground. The Rodman nine, however, were now running in from the field, and as the umpire did not pay the slightest attention to the protests of the recent batsman he soon joined his fellows on the field.

"Great work, Dan!" exclaimed Walter, as, after selecting his bat, he stopped a moment beside his friend and patted him on the shoulder. "You struck out two men and caught another off first."



"I'm sorry I hit him," said Dan gently.

"It's all in the game!" retorted Walter lightly.

"And now let's see what we can do at the bat. I'm the second man up and you follow me, Dan."

"Yes."

"Better get your bat."

"I'll have it when my turn comes."

Tom Richards came first to bat and after hitting two fouls he sent a slow ball toward third base, which the fielder threw somewhat wildly and Tom was safe at first, to the delight of Silas, who noisily expressed his pleasure.

"I'm going to bunt, Dan," said Walter in a low voice. "I'll sacrifice Tom to second or third if he can steal second."

"Give him a chance and he'll steal it all right."

"Then I'll make a sacrifice hit."

"Better line it out, Walter," suggested Dan as his friend advanced to the plate. Walter smiled, but did not respond as he confidently faced the pitcher of the opposing nine. He permitted the first ball to pass and a strike was promptly called by Moulton. Pretending to hit at the second ball his action slightly confused the catcher who dropped the ball as Tom sped safely to second. The next ball Walter tapped lightly, and as it rolled slowly toward the third-baseman the latter seized it and threw swiftly to first, Tom meanwhile gaining third base safely on the play.

"Is that th' best ye can do?" demanded the



harness-maker as Walter turned away from first base. "A baby could hit as far 's you did."

"That was a bunt," said Walter flushing slightly as some of the spectators near Silas laughed.

"Yes, I see 'twas—a baby-bunter."

"I made a sacrifice hit to put Tom on third."

"Oh, ye did, did ye? Well, I guess if Tom couldn't run like a white-head all yer buntin' wouldn't 'a' helped him. Hi! That's th' way t' do things!" Silas shouted as Dan hit a ball that passed far over the head of the left-fielder. That's th' way t' play ball! No city fellow could do that, Dannie, my boy! Go it! Go on! Run, ye little terror!" he added in his excitement as Dan turned second and sped on toward the third base, Tom meanwhile having leisurely crossed the home plate.

The noisy plaudits of the assembly redoubled when the next player to face the Benson pitcher drove a liner above the head of the second-base-man and Dan ran home. There was, however, no concerted cheering, everyone acting upon his own impulse, while above the din steadily rose the stentorian cries of Silas. "I told ye our boys could play ball!" he roared. "We'll beat 'em! We'll send 'em home with their tail-feathers all pulled out! Hoein' corn is th' ticket for th' Benson nine! Who-o-o-p! Ho-e-e-e!" Walter smiled as he watched the excited spectators, in his mind contrasting the motley crowd with the well-organized and united cheering and singing that rose from the



“bleachers” of the Tait School when the school nine was battling on the diamond. The difference was so marked that, full of the thought of the lack of knowledge on the part of the assemblage, he smiled in an added air of condescension. Then he turned to one of the Rodman nine who was selecting a bat, preparatory to following the player whose turn to face the pitcher had been loudly proclaimed by the scorer. “Take a good hold of your bat,” suggested Walter. “Don’t take the end of the bat. Put your hands a little farther up and don’t try to ‘kill’ the ball. Just meet it with your bat. There’s force enough in the ball to send it as far as you want it to go if it just strikes the bat—that is, if you keep a good grip.”

“Is that the reason why you made such a long hit?” inquired the player as he left Walter and stepped to the plate in place of the batter, who had popped a little fly directly into the hands of the pitcher.

“That was a ‘bunt’ I made,” said Walter tartly.

“Not much of a bunt at that,” laughed the player.

Half angry and yet amused, Walter watched the batter as he swung back, and then as the ball sped toward him, lunged forward and struck with all his might.

“Strike,” called the umpire promptly.

“Of course it’s a strike,” said Walter as he seated himself beside Dan on the grass. “Look at the great awkward clouter,” he added as the batter



again endeavored to strike with all his might. "What's the fellow thinking of? Is he trying to drive it across the road yonder?"

"If Josh hits it once that's about where it will go," replied Dan quietly.

"Yes; but he can't hit it!" retorted Walter triumphantly as the batter was called out on strikes after he had made another terrific attempt to hit the swiftly thrown ball. "That's three out," he added as he and his companion arose. "Dan, if you can keep up your good work those Benson fellows will be a sorry looking lot when they start for their native lair."

Dan, however, did not respond. Taking his position near the box, he began to throw the ball swiftly, first to one baseman and then to another. In a brief time the game was resumed and Dan's labors were renewed.

"Ball one," called the umpire after the first ball was delivered.

"Strike one" and "ball two" and "ball three" followed in order, the batter apparently making no attempt to hit.

"Look out thar, Dan'l!" shouted Silas. "Watch that fellow; don't ye let him fool ye!"

"Careful, Dan," suggested Walter in a low voice.

The batter, however, awkwardly struck the ball and a high foul resulted, the catcher succeeding, after a long run, in reaching and holding it.

"Hi! That's one out! Put that down in yer



book or ye may forget it!" roared Silas to the scorer. "I guess those Benson fellows feel a little homesick! Don't be too hard on 'em, Dan! Jes' let 'em knock a ball t' th' city fellow ye've got for short-stop."

Walter's cheeks flushed slightly as a laugh from the crowd greeted the suggestion of Silas, but he did not glance in the direction of the noisy harness-maker.

The next batter "fanned" and Silas gave vent to his glee in renewed calls upon the Benson nine to "shut up shop." When the third man faced Dan and he too "fanned" out, even Walter began to share in the excitement that prevailed in the Rodman contingent.

"Dan, you've struck out five of the six men that have faced you," he said warmly as he walked beside his friend from the diamond.

"Luck, I guess," said Dan dryly.

"Then it's mighty good luck, that's all I can say," laughed Walter.

"The game is young yet," Dan remarked quietly.

"So it is, but that doesn't change the fact that in the first two innings the Bensons haven't got but one man as far as first or that you have struck out five of the six who have faced you."

It was plain that Dan did not desire to talk and Walter too was soon silent, watching the batters. The first man up received his base on balls, the second batter made a hit and in the throw-in the



runner gained third, while the batter, by a burst of speed, succeeded in reaching second amid great applause.

“Get up, Dan. Tell them to try a double steal!” suggested Walter eagerly.

“What’s that?”

“They can work a squeeze play if they want to.”

“A double steal?”

“No; a squeeze play.”

“Why, it’s a——” Dan stopped abruptly as Silas at that moment came toward the two boys.



## CHAPTER VII

## A DISPUTE

**T**ELL him to get off the field," said Walter in a low voice as he saw the stout harness-maker approaching.

"Tell ye what, Dan," roared Silas, "ye're jest givin' Benson somethin' t' think on. Our boys are jest knockin' th' cover right off th' ball."

"That doesn't look like it," responded Dan quietly as the Rodman batter hit a little fly to the short-stop, who turned quickly and caught one of the runners. It was the first occasion for a shout from the followers of the Benson nine and the applause was as noisy as it was prolonged. Two boys, one with a pitchfork in his hand, jumped down from their seat in a farm wagon which they had driven to a place not far from third base. "Hello, Si!" shouted one of the boys. "We're goin' t' give you fellows a dose you'll never forget."

"Be ye?" retorted Silas, his round face shining under the heat and his excitement. "If ye keep up as ye've begun, it'll look like the 'dose' was somethin' prepared special for Benson. Ye haven't got a man t' first base yet."

"Just wait, Si——"



"I am a-waitin'," interrupted the harness-maker. "An' so be you, I guess. Doesn't seem t' be doin' ye much good, though."

"You haven't got but two runs."

"That's jes' two more'n you've got."

"Wait till this inning is over."

"All right. I'm pretty good at waitin'. If you get a fellow as far as third I'll give ye a new saddle."

"The saddle is mine. I'll stop for it on my way back t' Benson."

"An' keep up th' same waitin' ye've been havin', I guess."

"Dan," said Walter, as the two boys a few minutes later together walked out to the field, "the keenness of Si's wit is almost too much for me. I don't know but I'd better go out under the shade of that maple yonder and rest up."

The young pitcher, however, neither responded nor acted as if he saw anything unusual in the boasting of the harness-maker. In a brief time the game was resumed.

Again the first batter to face Dan struck out. The second was hit with the ball, and a wild yell arose from the boy with a pitchfork, who was still standing near third base. "Now run, Zeb!" he shouted to the player, who was on first base ruefully rubbing his shoulder. "Never mind a little thing like that! 'Twon't hurt long! I'll risk ye! If ye get around home I'll let ye ride back t' Benson on my new saddle."



Dan at that moment threw swiftly to his first-baseman, but the runner, who perhaps was thinking more of his bruised shoulder than of the game, unfortunately was directly in the way of the ball and was again hit by the swiftly thrown sphere. Leaping to his feet with a yell, he shook his fist at the pitcher and shouted, "Do that again an' I'll knock yer head off!"

Instantly Dan threw the ball, which had been returned to him, and the baseman touched the excited runner, who had incautiously advanced a yard or more toward the pitcher.

"You're out," said Moulton quietly as the man was touched before he could regain the base.

"I hain't neither!" roared the angry player as he advanced threateningly toward the umpire.

Ignoring the protest, the umpire motioned to Dan to resume his work and the young pitcher instantly threw the ball.

"Strike!" called Moulton promptly.

"Look here, you!" said the angry player that had been declared out at first. He had approached the umpire and wrathfully was facing him. "Do you know what I'd give you for two cents?"

"Get off the field," said Moulton quietly, scarcely glancing at him.

"I won't get off! I tell ye I wa'n't out at first. No, sir! That fellow stood right in my way."

"I told you to get off the field," said Moulton again in a low voice.



"Mebbe you'll put me off."

Lifting his hand in token that time was called, Moulton turned to the angered player and said, "I don't want to make any trouble. If you don't know any better——"

"I know what I'm talkin' about!" interrupted the Bensonite. "I'm telling you I wa'n't out on first."

"I called you out."

"I know ye did, but that doesn't make it so, does it?"

"Yes. Now leave the field and take your seat."

The silence among the spectators was tense as the eyes of everyone were turned toward the two boys. "That's Jim Fuller," said the farmer boy who, still holding his pitchfork in his hand, was standing beside Silas near third base. "He's the best wrestler in Benson. That umpire doesn't want t' rile him."

"Don't ye worry none 'bout th' umpire," retorted Silas promptly. "I rather guess he c'n give an' 'count o' himself if he has to."

Both became silent a moment as the protesting Benson player looking angrily at Moulton, finally said: "You're a robber, but I'm goin' t' let ye have your way this time. But if ye call me out again when I hain't out—why, jes' look out for yerself. That's all I've got t' say t' ye." As the Benson player turned to seek the place where the fellow-members of his nine were seated, a derisive shout



from the Rodman supporters greeted him and he instantly turned and faced the noisy crowd as he shook his fist at them. The game was resumed as Moulton quietly tossed the ball to Dan.

Whether it was due to the excitement or because he was not keenly watching the batter Walter did not know, but the third batter rapped a ball feebly toward the short-stop and as Walter seized it and threw it high above the head of the first-baseman the runner gained second and then started toward third.

“Get that ball! Don’t let th’ feller get third! I don’t want t’ give up a new saddle!” roared Silas.

Walter heard the shouts of Silas above the wild yells of the dancing Bensonites, who were leaping and slapping their thighs and emitting wild shouts in their excitement. The first-baseman now had recovered the ball and threw it fiercely to overtake the runner. In his eagerness Walter leaped and caught the ball, which had been thrown high, and as he came down he fell directly upon the runner and both lay sprawling upon the ground. Wriggling from the place, the Benson player crawled over the intervening yard and lay with his outstretched hand grasping the third base. “Never touched me!” he shouted triumphantly.

“He’s out,” said Moulton quietly. The player, however, doggedly seated himself upon the base and refused to move.



"Get off the field!" shouted Walter angrily. "Don't you know how to play ball?"

"You're the whole thing, are you?" tauntingly called the Benson player, who was calmly seated. "Maybe you've come up into the country to show us greenhorns how the game is played."

"I know enough not to dispute the umpire," retorted Walter, his face flushing with anger.

"It's your umpire. He isn't giving us any show at all. You didn't touch me with the ball and you know you didn't!"

"I did touch you."

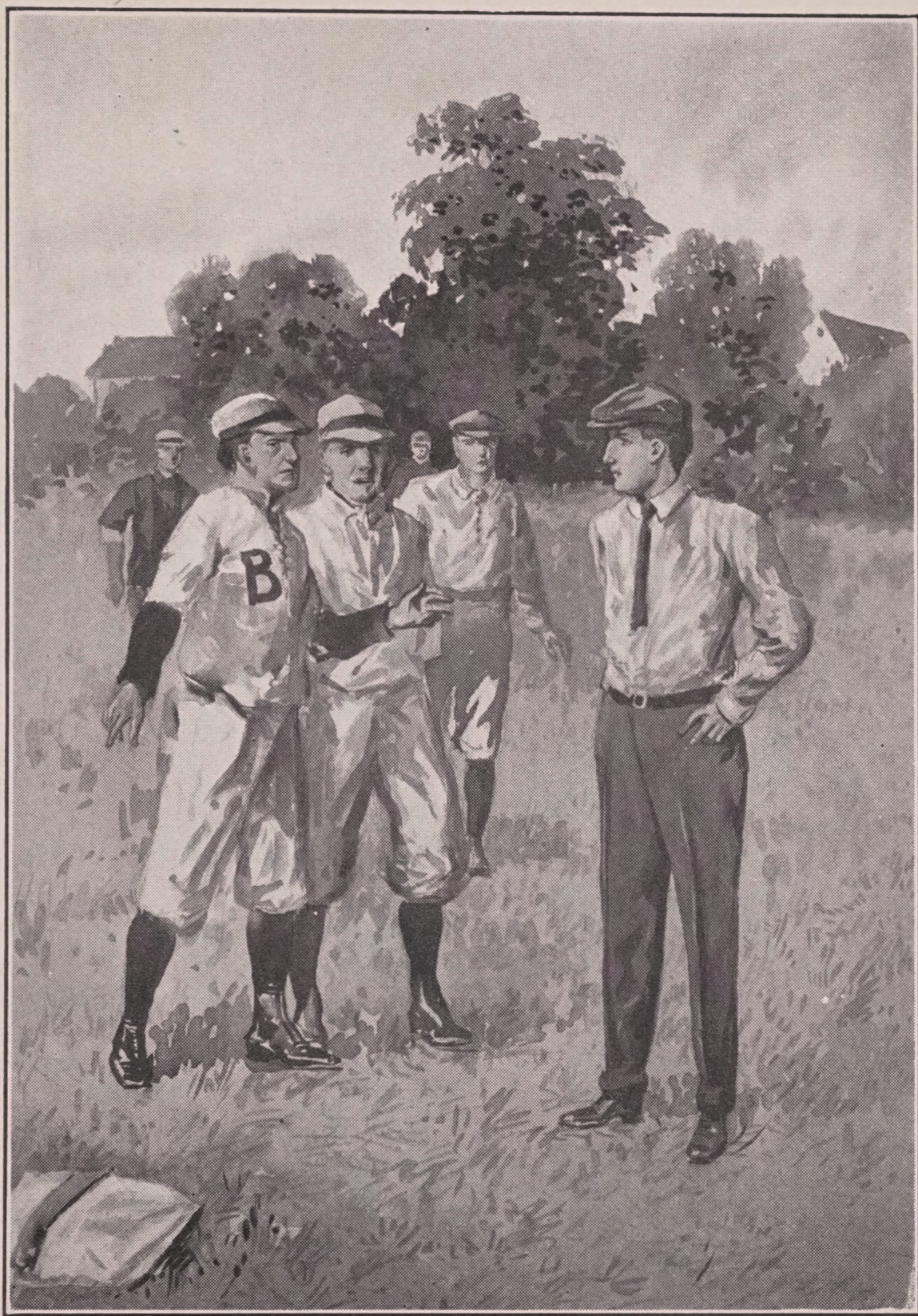
"Go tell that to somebody that didn't see it!"

By this time the players of both nines were assembled near the third base, almost all of them shouting and gesticulating wildly. Dan remained in his position near the box, but he was the only member of the Rodman nine who had not run to join in the noisy altercation.

Suddenly in the midst of the confusion the runner leaped to his feet and made a wild dash for the plate. As there was no one there to prevent him he easily crossed, and turning to the scorer shouted: "That's a run for us! Don't forget to set down that score for me. They can't work that on us, not when we have our eyes open!"

For a moment the confusion redoubled, the excited spectators rushing upon the diamond and adding their noisy claims or protests to the shouts of the rival players.





*“ ‘No one else saw it,’ growled the captain’ ”*







Moulton now quietly approached the assembly, and pushing his way into the midst of the throng he said, "The runner was out."

"No, he wasn't either!" roared the captain of the Benson nine. "Your man never touched him! He wasn't out!"

"Look here!" said Moulton advancing upon the speaker. "You asked me to umpire this game, didn't you?"

"I suppose so," growled the captain, "but we don't intend to be robbed——"

"No one intends to rob you of anything," broke in Moulton in a low voice. "I saw the play. The man was out, that is all there is to it."

"No one else saw it," growled the captain.

"That may be true, but it doesn't change matters. He was out. Now if you want to play ball go on with the game. If you'd rather spend your time wrangling like a lot of hoodlums, then that is your privilege. Either go on with the game and tell your men to play ball as gentlemen ought to play it or give it up and quit."

The angry captain glared at the umpire a moment, then turned sulkily to his companions and said: "Oh, well, come on, fellows! I suppose we'll have to give in, but we've got to play the umpire as well as the Rodman nine."

"I guess it isn't the umpire, it's the pitcher that bothers those fellows," said Walter to the third-baseman as the Benson players sulkily walked to



their positions on the field. "Dan is doing great work!"

His words were overheard by the Benson player who had been the cause of the interruption. Stopping abruptly, he glared at Walter a moment and then said: "I guess if the pitcher didn't do any better than your short-stop does, it wouldn't take long to wind up this game."

"Don't say anything, Walter," said Dan as he came to the side of his friend and quietly took his arm. "When a fellow is in the game he wants to work the muscles in his arms and legs and back, but there are some other muscles he doesn't want to let get into the game at all."

"You mean the muscles of his tongue?"

"Yes."

"I never dispute the umpire anyway," said Walter, his face flushing slightly as he spoke.

"Don't dispute the other nine. If there is any disputing to be done, let them do it all."

"But they were——"

"Yes, I know," broke in Dan. "But it doesn't pay. Besides, it's part of the game to learn to control one's self."

"Dan, you're a wonder!" exclaimed Walter good-naturedly. "If you'll strike out the men in one-two-three order the next inning, I'll promise not to say another word before the ninth inning."

"I'll do my best. You're the first to bat."

"Am I? I'd forgotten that in the excitement."



Seizing his bat Walter advanced to the plate, and in his eagerness to redeem himself he struck at the first ball and sent a slowly rolling grounder toward second. The Benson second-baseman juggled the ball and Walter's speed increased as he dashed toward first. He was aware of the shrill exhortations of Silas to "hump himself," whatever that might mean, and just as he gained the base the ball was caught by the baseman, who stood directly in front of the base. The first-baseman was the one who had made the trouble in the preceding inning, and a grin appeared on his face as he looked at Walter. For an instant Walter was intensely angry and was about to voice his protest. The sight of Dan, who had advanced to coach the runner, however, instantly sobered him and he merely said, "A raw deal, Dan," as he passed his friend.

Dan scowled as he replied, "I know it, Walter, but let it go."

As he rejoined his companions Walter did not refer to his recent experience and seated himself to watch the progress of the game. A base on balls and two hits netted two more runs and the stentorian plaudits of the harness-maker were heard over all the field. The Benson supporters were strangely silent as their nine came in once more to bat. There was little shouting until the first player to face Dan received his base on balls. Then the hopes of Benson revived and a wild yell followed the player as he went to first base.



## CHAPTER VIII

## A RECORD

SILENCE speedily swept over the assembly as the next two batters both struck out. The third batter managed to send a slow roller toward first base, which speedily was taken by the baseman, who did not return to his base, but stood waiting on the line to touch the runner. The Benson player attempted to run into the waiting player, but the Rodman baseman stepped nimbly to one side, avoiding the onslaught, although he succeeded in touching the fleet-footed runner.

When Walter joined Dan, as the Rodman nine came in from the field, his enthusiasm became still more marked. "Dan," he said, "can't these fellows bat any? Is that the reason for the exhibition they're making of themselves or is it because you are pitching such a game?"

Dan smiled in his demure way, but did not directly reply to the question of his friend. Whatever may have been the trouble with the opposing nine the Rodman players at least found little difficulty in solving the curves of the pitcher that faced them. As the game progressed the score of the Rodman team steadily increased, while in every inning at



least two of the Benson players struck out and the sole hit they had made was a two-base hit in the seventh inning. The prowess of the batter, however, had been without avail, for he had been left on second base, the two batters that followed him having both been struck out. When the ninth inning came the score stood fifteen to nothing in favor of Rodman.

"Don't lose your nerve now," Walter said to Dan as they resumed their places in the field for the final inning.

Dan laughed good-naturedly and by way of reply threw the ball swiftly to his friend at short, who in turn threw it to first.

And yet Walter was suspicious of Dan, or at least fearful. What a record he had made, with only one hit and thirteen strike-outs in the eight innings. There was slight danger that the game would be lost, but if Dan should "go to pieces" now the marvelous record might be spoiled. Dan had not had much experience in pitching and it would not be unnatural if, under the strain, he should fail to maintain the steady success that thus far had so wonderfully marked his work in the game. The Benson supporters, as well as the Benson nine, had ceased most of their noisy protests, the failure of their batters to do anything with Dan's pitching being too manifest to be explained or even defended. As for Walter's part in the game, thus far he had not covered himself with glory; he had



made two errors and not a hit had been placed to his credit. It is true he had caught two high twisting flies and had received vociferous applause from Silas and his companions for his successful attempts, but in the light of his condescending manner at the beginning of the game and the freedom with which he had lavishly given his instructions he felt that he stood before the assembled spectators in no very favorable light. Dan not only had pitched a wonderful game, but had not failed once in hitting the ball when he came to bat. Once he had sent the ball far over the head of the left-fielder—a hit which had brought him safely to third base, and also won tumultuous applause from Silas, who was the unrecognized leader of the cheering of the Rodman supporters.

And now the final test for Dan had come. Would he be able to keep up his good work? Walter was nervous as Dan drew back to send in the first ball.

Crack! The batter hit the ball with a force that sent it skipping between short-stop and third base, and the runner was safe at first, with the second safe hit the Benson players had secured. The following batter was given his base on balls, and the runner at first slowly made his way to second. Two on bases and none out! Had Dan's hand lost its cunning? "Steady, Dan," called Walter, striving to speak encouragingly. The young pitcher, however, did not even glance in the direction of his



short-stop. With increased deliberation he drew back his arm and sent in a slow in-curve.

Crack! Dan's heart sank an instant at the sound, and then he was aware that the ball was coming swiftly toward him. He put up his hands almost instinctively and, scarcely realizing what he was doing, caught the ball. Instantly swinging about he threw the ball to second and the player was out. "First! First! Throw it to first!" shouted Dan almost beside himself in his excitement. "Throw it! Throw it!" he yelled frantically, going through the motion of throwing the ball himself in his eagerness.

The second-baseman, at the sharp call, wheeled and sent the ball with all his might to the first-baseman, who had advanced several feet from the base and was standing with outstretched hands awaiting the coming of the sphere. The Benson runner who, at the sound of the bat when it struck the ball, had heedlessly started at full speed for second, now was frantically endeavoring to regain first base. As the baseman caught the ball the runner dove head-foremost, and the two came down in a heap about six feet from the coveted bag.

Dan was dimly aware of a mighty shout that went up from the excited spectators, but he instantly ran to the place where the two players were lying. The Rodman player had been struck in the pit of the stomach by the head of the Benson player and was gasping for breath, his face being colorless.



"Work his feet, Dan," called Walter as he himself began to move the arms of the player much after the manner in which the handle of a pump is manipulated. There were expressions of anger to be seen on the faces of the people that instantly rushed upon the field, and for a moment there were signs of serious trouble. Fortunately the Rodman first-baseman quickly recovered and arose, though he stood for a brief time pale and trembling. With his recovery the threatening peril of a conflict was avoided and slowly the assembly began to depart from the field.

"Dan, that was a wonderful catch you made," said Walter quietly, as he joined his friend.

"Was it?" laughed Dan, elated by the words of praise.

"Yes; though the best thing you did was when you sent the ball like a shot to second," said Walter.

"Nat Carey wasn't asleep. He got the ball to first in time to catch the runner. Nat played a good game to-day at second."

"That is the first time I ever saw a triple play."

"Is it?"

"Yes. It was great."

"It saved the day, I guess."

"You ought not to complain, Dan," said Walter. "Fifteen strike-outs shouldn't make you blush."

"I'm not blushing."

"Ye didn't do s' bad after all," roared Silas, at that moment joining the boys and slapping Walter



on the back as he spoke. "I thought long in th' first o' th' game ye wasn't worth shucks, but th' way ye took that liner an' then giv' it a heave t' second was pretty slick. What d'ye think o' the Rodman nine now?" he added triumphantly.

"I think the 'nine' consisted mostly of Dan and his pitching."

"Dan done noble," admitted Silas, "but th' trouble was he didn't give none o' th' other fellows a show. He struck out so many o' th' Benson chaps that 'bout all th' was left for our boys was t' stan' still an' watch th' Bensons walk up t' th' home plate, sass th' umpire, give their club a fling, an' march back an' sit down."

"Well, it came out all right, Silas," laughed Walter.

"Ye're right it did. I told ye 'twould, didn't I? Neow what d'ye think 'bout what I said?"

"What did you say?"

"That Dan ought t' get th' New Yorks t' come up here. I rather guess Dan could give their best knockers somethin' t' think 'bout."

Dan laughed lightly, and Walter said: "Silas, I'm afraid you're a little bit prejudiced in favor of the Rodman nine."

"Not a bit. Ye see what was done to the Benson fellows, didn't ye? That tells th' whole story."

"It might be a different story if we had been playing a professional team like New York or Chicago."



"Prob'ly they'd got a run or two," admitted Silas, "but they couldn't 'a' batted Dan. Nobody could."

"He certainly did well," said Walter warmly as he turned once more to his friend. "Dan," he added abruptly, "come over to the house this evening, won't you?"

"Why?"

"My father will be there. He's coming up this afternoon and I want you to meet him."

"That's good of you, but probably he won't be overanxious to see me. Why should he?"

"After you struck out fifteen men this afternoon? Why, it's like meeting the President or the King of England!" exclaimed Walter enthusiastically.

"Is that all?" laughed Dan.

"No, it isn't all. Will you come?"

"I'll think about it."

"Will you come?" said Walter persistently.

"What time?"

"Any time after supper."

"I guess so."

"I shall expect you!"

The boys separated, each starting for his home. Walter's elation over the result of the game was great and manifested itself in the way in which he walked along the road that led to his grandfather's farm, which was a half-mile or more from the little village. His thoughts plainly were upon some project in his mind, for he frequently exclaimed, "Great! We'll have something to show



next spring! The school will think I've made the greatest find in years!"

As Walter turned into his grandfather's yard he saw his father and mother seated on the wide, shaded veranda, and instantly he ran to greet them. "When did you come?" he asked his father as soon as he had warmly welcomed him.

"I arrived about half an hour ago. Been playing ball, Walter?" Mr. Borden inquired, as he glanced at his boy's uniform.

Walter laughed as he replied, "I thought better of you than that. What did you think I wore this suit for? To hoe potatoes?"

"One might suspect something of the kind," said Mr. Borden smilingly. "It certainly couldn't look worse if you had been hoeing potatoes."

"That's what I got in sliding to second," explained Walter as he glanced at his discolored suit. "I'm awfully glad you came, pop," he added affectionately. "I've got something to say to you."

"How much?" asked his father in mock seriousness as he at once thrust his hand into his pocket.

"It isn't money—at least, it isn't money for me."

"What then?"

"You know Dan Richards, don't you?"

"Is he the boy that lives with his mother on the farm yonder?"

"Yes, sir. He's one of the finest fellows I ever met."

"I'm glad to hear that."



"Yes, sir; he is. And he told me the other day that he was saving up his money——"

"Did he explain how, clearly enough for you to see?" broke in Mr. Borden good-naturedly. "I shall be glad if——"

"No," interrupted Walter, "he's saving his money so that he can go to the normal school this year and then he wants to go to college."

"A very worthy ambition—if he has the root of the matter in him."

"He has. He's one of the best fellows that ever lived! He struck out fifteen men in to-day's game!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir; he did! Now what I want is for you to send him to the Tait School with me this year."

"And he struck out fifteen men," laughed Mr. Borden.

"Yes, sir; I wish you might have seen him! It was wonderful! And he'll do well in school and in college too! He's one of those quiet fellows who always do everything well."

"That means a thousand dollars a year, Walter."

"Well, you can cut down my allowance. He can room with me. I'm sure he'd have a good influence over me and you often say you care more for that than you do for anything else."

"I do, my boy. You'd better get ready for supper now. We'll talk about this matter later."

"What a generous boy Walter is!" said his mother fondly as her son departed.



"What makes you think that?" inquired her husband.

"Because he wants to help Dan. And Dan is a good boy. He is fond of Walter, and I hear that he is very good to his mother, who is a widow."

"Likewise he struck out fifteen to-day," retorted Mr. Borden quizzically.

"What makes you laugh?" demanded Mrs. Borden a little resentfully. "I'm sure I don't know just what that means, but it must be something good."



## CHAPTER IX

### STUDYING A BOY

IT is good, very good, indeed. It isn't often a young pitcher can do so well as that, but I fancy he didn't have any very skilful batters to face," laughed Mr. Borden.

"I don't know what 'struck out' means," said Mrs. Borden. "It doesn't mean that Dan struck anybody, does it?"

"Not necessarily."

"Well, I'm sure he is a good boy and I'm proud of Walter that he wants to help Dan obtain an education. For my part I think it shows a decidedly generous nature."

"I thought he wanted me to help Dan."

"You know perfectly well what he meant."

"Yes, I fancy I do," said her husband good-naturedly.

"You are going to help him, aren't you?"

"It depends."

"Upon what?"

"Upon what I find in the boy. I don't know of any better way to invest my money than to put it into men. But there isn't any use in trying to make a successful man out of an incompetent or lazy boy."



"Dan isn't lazy—I'm sure of that," said Mrs. Borden warmly. "Everybody around here knows how hard he and Tom work on the farm."

"Who is Tom?"

"He is Dan's brother."

"And does he too want to go to school and college?"

"I haven't heard that he did. What Walter said about Dan to-night is the first I've heard that Dan wanted an education."

"And he struck out fifteen in the game to-day," said Mr. Borden mockingly.

"I don't understand what you mean, but you say it isn't anything bad."

"On the contrary, it is quite remarkable."

"Then why do you laugh?"

"Did I laugh?" asked Mr. Borden soberly.

"You know you did. It doesn't seem to me quite fair to Walter. I'm sure if he takes an interest in helping Dan get an education you ought not to discourage him."

"Perish the thought, mother."

"I never can tell whether you are serious or not."

"I'm serious about one thing—I wish supper was ready."

"I'm sure it must be, for I heard Martha say she would have it by the time Walter came."

"Well, Walter has come, but I don't see any signs of supper."

"There! There's the gong!" exclaimed Mrs.



Borden as the musical sound of a Japanese gong was heard from the dining-room. "You won't have to wait any longer. Here comes Walter."

All hastened at once to the room where supper was served and the food Martha had prepared speedily began to disappear from the table.

"This is better than the city," said Mr. Borden after a brief time had elapsed. "It was very warm there this morning. Here, the very view I have from the window rests me. I sometimes think I'd like to give up work and come up here and stay."

"You wouldn't think of giving up work at your age," exclaimed his wife.

"Not with one boy in the Tait School and another that Walter is thinking of sending," laughed Mr. Borden.

"You helped one of the boys in your office to go to college," suggested Walter.

"He was worth it—worth all I put into him."

"So will Dan be."

"That remains to be seen. I suppose I'll have a chance some time to see this prodigy—let me see, was it eighteen he struck out to-day?"

"Fifteen," replied Walter promptly. "Dan is coming over here after supper."

"Have you said anything to him?" asked Mr. Borden sharply.

"No, sir; not a word."

"That is wise. Well, we'll soon find out whether it's another Daniel come to judgment or just



another case of mistaken identity. You say he struck out twenty men to-day?"

"No, fifteen."

"So it was. How much do you pay this Dan when you hire him to take you fishing on Six Town Pond?"

"Two dollars a day."

"Does he earn his money?"

"He does that!" exclaimed Walter with enthusiasm. "The other day we got a pickerel that weighed almost ten pounds and we saw a snake almost as big as a fence rail."

"You say 'we' got a ten-pound pickerel. Who got it—you or Dan?"

"I caught it—though I don't believe I'd have landed it if it hadn't been for him."

"Quite likely. What did he do?"

"He just told me what to do."

"Has he been studying any at night?" abruptly asked Mr. Borden.

"Every night," replied Walter promptly.

"I'll go over to his farm with you to-morrow morning."

"Dan said he might come over here to-night."

"That is all right," said Mr. Borden quietly.

An hour later when the entire family was seated on the piazza Dan appeared. He was quiet, almost shy in his bearing, and as he accepted Mrs. Borden's invitation to a seat with the family he



found himself sitting between Walter and his father. Mr. Borden took little part in the conversation, but Walter was positive that his father was quietly observing his friend and consequently was eager to have him make a good impression. But Dan too was unusually silent even for him and Walter was compelled to do most of the talking, though it cannot be said that the task, for him, was a difficult one.

At last Mr. Borden inquired, "Dan, how many acres are in your farm?"

"Fifty-one, sir," replied Dan.

"All under cultivation?"

"No, sir. We have a nine-acre wood-lot and there are about twelve acres we use as pasture. It's rock land and the soil is thin."

"What do you raise mostly?"

"Some wheat, considerable corn, and more potatoes?"

"Why do you raise potatoes?"

"Because I have a ready market and they pay best. The soil is just right for them."

"How do you know it is?"

"If you saw our potatoes I don't think you'd ask that question."

"Did your father raise many potatoes?"

"No, sir."

"What made you try it then?"

"One of the Otis boys took the agricultural course at college. When he was in college I asked



him to analyze some of the soil. It was when he was a student and I don't suppose his analysis was absolutely correct. But he talked with his professors, told them about our farm, how it was located and all, and they advised trying potatoes as a crop. We did—and we are satisfied.”

“You say you have a good market. Where is it?”

“All over is about the best answer I can give you, Mr. Borden. A good many people come up here every summer from the city. I make arrangements with a few of them to ship a barrel or two directly to each family every fall.”

“Do you get the market price?”

“Yes, sir; after taking out the freight.”

“Market price here or of the wholesalers or retailers in the city?”

“The retail price in the city.”

“Don't you think that is a little too much?”  
laughed Mr. Borden.

“No, sir.”

“How is that?”

“They pay us just what they'd have to pay at a grocery store, and our potatoes are better.”

“Is that what your customers say?”

“Yes, sir; and we don't have any small potatoes in the bottom of the barrel.”

“That's something worth thinking of. My boy tells me you played a great game of ball to-day.”

“Yes, sir; the nine did well.”



"Walter says you made up the nine."

"Did he tell you that? Walter himself began a triple play in the ninth inning that probably saved my record."

"I don't recall if he did."

"What is a triple play?" inquired Mrs. Borden.

"It's when you get three out right together," explained Walter.

"Of course. I ought to have known that," said Mrs. Borden. "How far 'out' do they have to go? I could hear the boys this afternoon. They were not very far out from the village."

"Not very far, mother," said Walter.

"I must come over and see your potatoes, Dan," said Mr. Borden. "Are they doing well this season?"

"Yes, sir," Dan replied, "though we've had a hard fight with the bugs. I never saw them worse than they are this summer."

For an hour or more the party remained on the piazza, Mr. Borden taking only an occasional part in the conversation, which Walter did not suffer to lag. Dan, absolutely unaware that Mr. Borden was listening and watching with a purpose, was quiet in his manner, speaking less frequently than his friend and then in fewer words. It was plain that he enjoyed the evening, for Walter's mother, as well as the other members of the family, by their manifest friendliness and interest, made him less conscious



of himself, and the quiet boy entered after his own manner into the spirit of the group.

After Dan's departure Mrs. Borden said to her husband, "Well, what do you think of Dan? To me he seems to be an unusually fine boy."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Borden.

"Are you going to help him through school?"

"I thought Walter was planning to do that," laughed Mr. Borden quietly.

"I am proud that my boy is so generous," said Mrs. Borden warmly. "He wants to help his friend."

"How many was it that Dan struck out?" asked Mr. Borden soberly as he turned to his boy. "Twenty-one, wasn't it?"

"No, sir; fifteen," replied Walter promptly.

"So it was," assented Mr. Borden. "That is a good record."

"But Dan is more than a good ball-player," asserted Walter. "He is a hard worker and he has the best head on him I ever saw. He never loses his head in a game, he doesn't dispute the umpire or yell at the fellows——"

"Do you ever do that, Walter?" broke in Mr. Borden.

"I'm afraid I do," admitted Walter shamefacedly.

"All boys shout, I hear them every day," spoke up Mrs. Borden. "I am sure Walter does no more than other boys of his age."



"Not in your ears, mother," laughed her husband. "Ask Walter what he thinks about it. He ought to know."

"What I want to know is whether or not you are going to help Dan."

"I cannot say as yet."

"Why not?"

"I must see more of him first. It would be no real kindness to Dan to take him away from the farm, where I fancy he is doing fairly well, and put him into some other work in which he might fail."

"But I thought you believed in education," protested Mrs. Borden.

"I do," said her husband simply.

"Then I don't see——" began Mrs. Borden.

"Education and school and college are not always the same thing."

"But schools are to provide education."

"They provide opportunities," said Mr. Borden quietly. "If a boy goes to school and doesn't use his opportunities, the fact that he has attended or even been graduated from a certain institution doesn't make him an educated man, does it? Education is like the water in a trough—if a horse doesn't drink it, it doesn't make any difference how many times he has been led to it or what a fine trough the water is in. No horse quenches his thirst except by drinking."

"What is an education then?"

"Perhaps I can best answer that question by



telling what a certain great college president explained it to be. He said there are four great processes or operations of a boy's mind which education ought to develop if it is to fulfil its best purpose—the first is observing accurately, the second is recording correctly, the next is the ability to compare and group and draw a correct inference, and the last is the ability to express clearly and forcefully what he has learned.”

“Don't you think Dan can do all that? I'm sure Walter can,” affirmed Mrs. Borden.

“Can he?” said Mr. Borden quizzically. “Well, if he can then he is educated already and I shall not need to send him to school any more. As for Dan, I must see more of him. The most I know now is that he struck out fifteen men to-day.”



## CHAPTER X

## MR. BORDEN DECIDES

BRIGHT and early the following morning, Mr. Borden, accompanied by Walter, went to Dan's home. Eager as Walter was to talk about the prospect of his friend being enrolled as a pupil in the Tait School he did not refer to the matter which was uppermost in his thoughts. The clear warm air of the summer morning, the green of the fields of waving corn, the sight of the well-fed and contented cattle in the pastures, the songs of the birds in the treetops—all were so attractive to the man who had found a brief respite from the cares of his office in the city that somehow Walter was aware that his father had no desire to talk. Accordingly, the two walked in silence and in a brief time stood before the open door of the kitchen in Dan's home, where his mother was busily engaged in her morning tasks.

"Good morning, Mrs. Richards," called Mr. Borden, who already had a slight acquaintance with Dan's mother. "Walter and I were taking a morning stroll and stopped for a moment to look about us here."

"Good morning, Mr. Borden," responded Mrs.



Richards, advancing to the door and drying her arms on a towel as she did so. There was no apology for being found doing this, and simply and cordially she said, "Won't you come in?"

"Thank you," replied Mr. Borden. "I think I understand what it means to be interrupted in a busy hour. No, we'll not come in, but if you don't object we'll take a walk about your place and look up the boys."

"They are in the field, yonder," she said pointing to a distant part of the little farm. "We call it the ten-acre lot."

"They appear to be busy too," suggested Mr. Borden.

"They are, but not too busy to see their friends. I'll call them," she added as she reached for a long tin horn that was hanging on the kitchen wall.

"No! not by any means!" said Mr. Borden hastily. "Don't disturb the boys. We shall find them easily. It is all slightly different from what I find in my office," he added smilingly. "There, I'm afraid the boys are more likely to stop work before the horn sounds."

"My boys are good workers—they have to be," said Mrs. Richards simply.

"Yes, I understand. It is hard when the head of the family is gone."

"It isn't that only, though of course Dan and Tom feel more responsibility than they would if their father had lived. But they are both inter-



ested in the farm, though Dan is interested in his books too."

"Which is he more interested in—the farm or his books?"

"Books."

"Isn't he too tired to study when night comes, after working so hard all day?"

"If he is he doesn't say anything about it. Since young Mr. Moulton has been here he has been helping Dan."

"Yes, he's been showing Dan how to pitch too," broke in Walter.

"So he has," said Mrs. Richards smilingly. "You'd think those boys had had enough work when night comes, but they go out behind the barn almost every night after supper and Dan will throw a ball to Tom with all his might and keep it up for an hour at a time. I hear Mr. Moulton talking to them, but I can't seem to make head or tail of what he is saying. It's mostly about inshoots and fade-aways and drop-balls and spitballs. When I was a girl in school the boys used to throw spitballs. I guess you could see some of 'em still sticking to the ceiling of the old Pine Tree schoolhouse. But Mr. Moulton and Tom and Dan seem to take it all seriously, though for my part I can't see how or why. But then," she added complacently, "they're boys and I'm just a middle-aged woman, an' it isn't natural to think I'd be interested in the things that interest my boys."



"You are interested in the boys though, I fancy," suggested Mr. Borden smiling as he spoke.

"I wouldn't be fit to be their mother if I wasn't. They're both good boys. There, I've talked enough about my own flesh and blood. I wish you would come in. I have some fresh buttermilk—right from the churn."

"We'll stop and have some on our way back if that will not be too much trouble," said Mr. Borden as he and Walter turned away.

As they came to the barn and sheds Mr. Borden glanced keenly at the objects in view. "Dan and Tom appear to be taking good care of their belongings," he said quietly. "The wagons are all under cover and there's no litter about the place. Let me step inside the barn a moment," he added as he entered the rude building.

Walter looked rather eagerly into his father's face when Mr. Borden came out of the barn, but as his father smiled and did not refer to what he had seen inside the building he did not voice the question he was eager to ask.

As the two drew near the place where Dan and his brother were hoeing, the young farmers did not stop their labors as they pleasantly greeted their visitors.

"We are on our way back home and just stopped a moment to look at your potato-field," Mr. Borden explained. "You certainly have a promising crop, boys."



"Yes, sir," replied Dan glancing with pride at the long and well-cultivated rows. "We have had an unusually good summer."

"Is this the last hoeing?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll still have to fight the bugs, won't you?"

"Oh yes," said Dan smiling as he spoke. "They keep us from getting lazy. I don't know what they were made for anyway."

"When you do find out you must not forget to let the rest of us know. You might investigate mosquitoes and a few other creatures while you are at it."

"Well, they are a sure cure for taking things too easily."

"Are they?" laughed Mr. Borden. "Some of us think we don't need any whip or spur for that. Have you ever been in the city, Dan?"

"Never in New York."

"Like it better here I fancy."

"I never expect to find anything I like as well as I do this place."

"Then you are planning to stay here, are you?"

"No, sir."

"I recall that Walter told me you were going to the normal school this fall."

"I want to go."

"If you are so fond of the farm why do you leave it?"

"A farmer ought to be more than his farm."



"I don't think I quite understand you."

"It pays to put money into a farm. It ought to pay better to put money into a farmer."

"Why?"

"I don't know that I can explain, though I see what I mean," said Dan thoughtfully. "I have an idea that an education helps to set a man's brains in working order."

"It ought to," assented Mr. Borden.

"That is what I want."

"So you are going to the normal school to work, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you don't expect to dodge any classes or slip along as easily as possible?"

"I don't know what I may do, but I know what I need and what I want too. I want to get my brains into as good working order as I have the muscles in my right arm."

"Walter told me you struck out fifteen yesterday."

"Yes, sir," replied Dan simply.

"Come on, Walter; we must be going," said Mr. Borden turning to his boy.

Bidding the young farmers good morning the visitors at once departed, walking toward the rail fence which they speedily climbed, and then following the course of the noisy brook they returned to the bridge.

"Dan seems to be a quiet fellow," said Mr.



Borden as he and Walter halted on the bridge and looked down into the swiftly flowing water.

"He is," exclaimed Walter eagerly. "There isn't a bit of brag in his whole make-up. Everybody likes him. And he has hardly been out of sight of Rodman in all his life."

"Time enough for that later. Why do you want him to go to the Tait School? Why not let him go on and do as he is planning?"

"Go to the normal school?"

"Yes."

"I'd like to have him with me."

"How many did he strike out?" asked Mr. Borden quizzically.

"Fifteen."

"And you think he'd do that for the Tait School nine?"

"I'd like him to have a chance to show what he can do."

"Walter, if Dan hadn't struck out fifteen yesterday would you have wanted him to enter the Tait School this year?"

"I don't know," replied Walter in some confusion. "Of course, I'd like our nine to have him. But his pitching isn't all there is to Dan. He's——"

"I can understand that," broke in Mr. Borden. "Come, Walter, we mustn't keep your grandmother's dinner waiting." As they at once started toward the farmhouse Walter was eager to ask his father what his decision was, but as Mr. Borden



walked thoughtfully along the roadside his boy looked at him keenly and decided to wait before he made any further inquiries. Indeed, Mr. Borden did not again refer to the matter until just before his departure for the city. He had been away from the farmhouse twice, but he had gone by himself each time, and did not refer to what he had been doing.

"Walter," Mr. Borden said as he was preparing for his departure, "I have decided to let you tell Dan that he can go to the Tait School this coming year."

"Great!" shouted Walter in his delight. "I was sure you would do it when you found out what kind of a fellow Dan is."

"I have talked with two or three who know him well—Mr. Moulton among others. Their reports are all favorable to Dan, but the one thing that more than any other influenced me was what I found he was doing in the work on the farm. Walter, he will room with you."

"Just what I want."

"You know, he has not been accustomed to some things that are a part of your life. He may appear a bit awkward at first——"

"I'll risk all that!" broke in the boy in his enthusiasm.

Mr. Borden smiled and said: "Very well, Walter. There is much that you and Dan can teach each other and I've no doubt each of you will try to be



a teacher. Whether or not either of you will be a very apt scholar remains to be seen."

"I don't understand."

"You will a little later."

"It's good of you to do this for Dan."

"Is it? Your mother says you are the one that is doing it. Don't forget that, Walter. Good-bye; I'll see you soon and I shall be interested in hearing about your talk with Dan."

As Mrs. Borden was to accompany her husband to the station, Walter at once started for Dan's home. He was highly elated over his father's decision, though he had been confident that his consent would be granted. It was seldom that Walter met a rebuff in the family in which he was an only child.

He stopped a moment on the bridge that spanned the brook and saw Dan coming from the fields to his house. The sight of his friend aroused his enthusiasm once more, and turning into the near-by lot Walter began to run. As he came near, he shouted in his eagerness, "Dan! Dan! Wait a minute! I've got something to tell you!"

Dan stopped as he heard the call, and in a brief time his friend ran to him. "What's wrong?" inquired Dan in his quiet way as he became aware of the excitement under which Walter was laboring.

"I've got some great news for you, Dan," panted Walter.

"For me?"



“Yes, sir! For you and me too. You’re going to the Tait School this year. You’re to room with me. You’ll be the pitcher on the nine and the biggest ‘find’ we’ve ever had. Oh, it’s immense, Dan! I just——”

“Hold on a minute,” interrupted Dan. “I’m not very clear what you mean.”

“You are to go to the Tait School this year and room with me.”

“How am I to go?”

“My father is to send you.”

“Do you mean he is to pay for me?”

“Yes, sir. That’s it exactly. He’s going to send you and you’re to room with me. Why? What’s wrong about that? It’s just as I’m telling you!” exclaimed Walter somewhat aghast as Dan slowly shook his head.



## CHAPTER XI

## A REFUSAL

I CAN'T do it," said Dan soberly.

"Can't do it!" exclaimed Walter. "You can't help yourself! You're going to the Tait School! You're going to room with me; you're going to pitch on our nine and——"

"It's good of you, Walter; but I can't, that's all."

"Why can't you?"

"It costs too much. I simply can't do it. I can go to the normal school——"

"But, man, you aren't going to pay the bills!" interrupted Walter.

"Who will pay them?"

"My father."

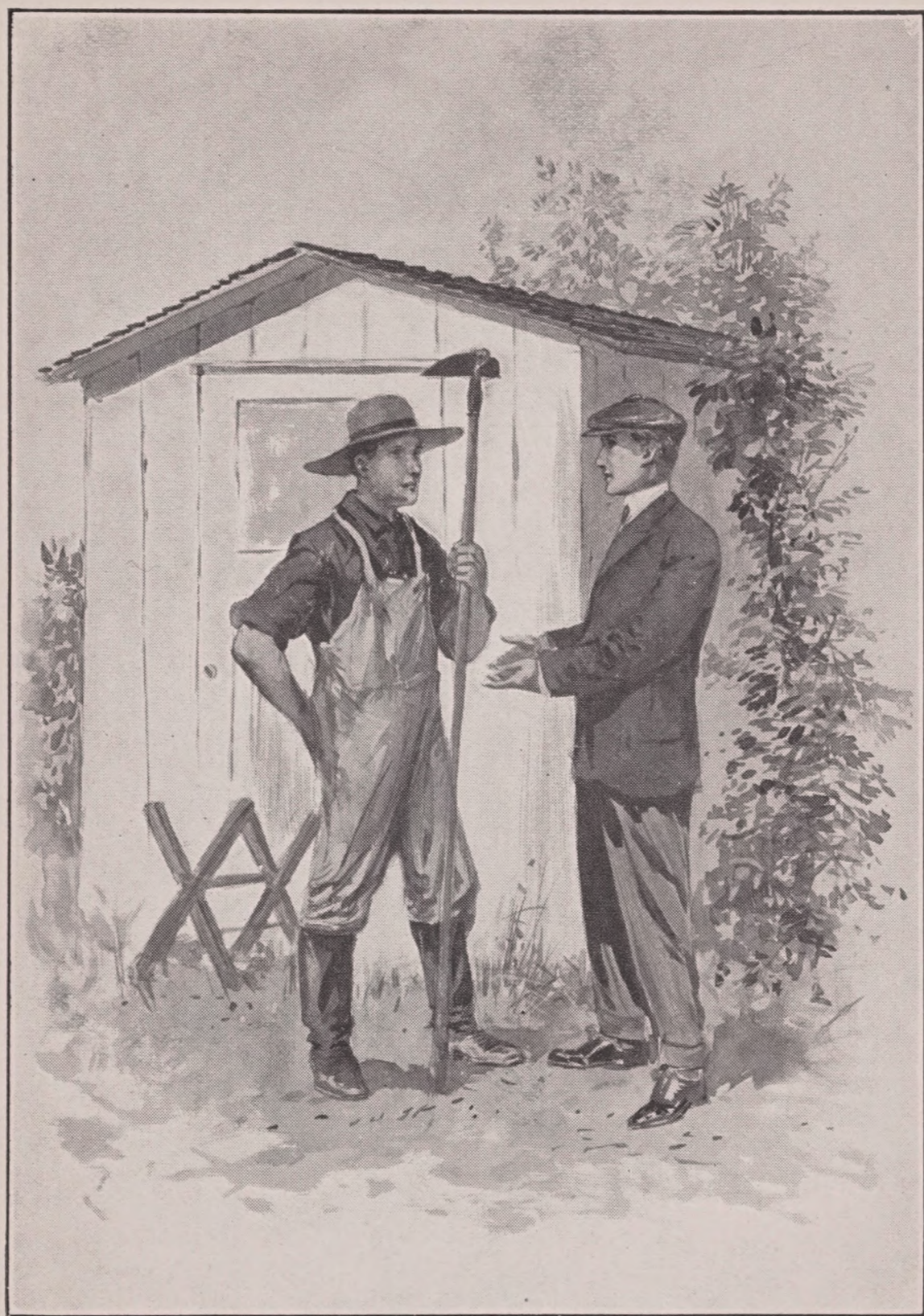
Dan was silent a moment, looking down at the ground at his feet. When he glanced at his friend again he said, "That's too much, Walter. It's too much for your father——"

"You don't know my father!" broke in Walter impulsively. "He has whole barrels of money. Why, Dan, only last month he cleaned up a cool hundred thousand in a deal——"

"Well, it's his money, not mine."

"Of course it is, and if he chooses to take one





“ ‘ But, man, you aren’t going to pay the bills’ ”

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per cent of what he made on that deal and put it into your education, why, that's his business too, isn't it?"

"Not entirely."

"Whose is it?"

"Partly mine."

"No, sir!" declared Walter emphatically. "It's none of your business! My father has a right to spend his own money just as he wants to, hasn't he? I've heard him say a million times that all money was good for anyway was just to use. Don't be foolish, Dan."

"I don't mean to be. I can't tell you how much I appreciate what you've just said to me. But, Walter, there's another side and you haven't thought of that."

"There isn't any other side!" declared Walter promptly.

"Doesn't everything have at least two sides?" asked Dan quizzically.

"No, sir!"

"What hasn't, for example?"

"This offer I'm making you. Why, Dan, it's the chance of a lifetime. You've never been out of Rodman except to go over to Benson or to Simpson's Corners to play ball. You don't know anything of what the world is like." Unaware of the dull flush that spread over Dan's cheeks as he spoke, Walter continued eagerly: "Why, man alive, the Tait School is the greatest school in the United



States! There isn't another that can hold a candle to it! Why, our nine whipped the freshman nine of every one of the big colleges. We've had more men enter college without conditions in the last five years than any other prep school. We've got the best teachers, the finest buildings, the greatest crowd of fellows. Why, Dan, you simply don't know what you're talking about! You're turning down a chance that hundreds of fellows would jump at. You can't mean it! If you talk it over with Moulton, he'll tell you that if you are fool enough to say no it'll just show that you haven't brains and aren't fit to go to school anywhere, not even to the normal school that you seem to think is one of the big institutions of the land. I'm not going to say another word to you about it now. When you think it over and tell your mother and Tom and Moulton about it you won't have a peg left to hang your hat on."

"It's good of you anyway, Walter," said Dan quietly. "Don't forget that I appreciate all you say."

"No! You don't half appreciate it or you wouldn't pull off the way you're doing. Honestly, Dan, is there a single real reason why you can't say 'yes' right off the bat?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I don't know that I can make you see it, Walter, but it's too much to take when I know it will be a long time before I can pay back the money."



"But you don't have to pay it back! You don't even have to think of that! My father will pay every cent of the term-bills!"

"Walter, did you ever think of what it means for a fellow to be poor and have to take what some one else gives him?"

"I don't know that I have," replied Walter more seriously. "Though when it comes to that," he added lightly, "I haven't very many shekels myself, except my allowance."

"That's different."

"I suppose it is—after a fashion. I never thought very much about it anyway."

"If I should offer to give you my yearling colt would you take her?"

"No."

"Of course you wouldn't," said Dan positively.

"That's different too. In the first place, you couldn't afford to give Ban away. She's too valuable——"

"No, that's not it!" interrupted Dan. "You wouldn't be thinking as much of me as you would of yourself. You'd be saying to yourself, 'I can't take Ban. It's too much to take as a gift.' Now, be honest, Walter, isn't that really just what you'd think?"

"Perhaps I might," admitted Walter, "but that has nothing to do with this case."

"Hasn't it?"

"Not a bit! You see——"



"I don't just see. I tell you, old man, it's good of you and your father, but I want you to think of my side too."

"Dan, you're an obstinate old——"

"I guess you're another."

"I'm not, either! You just pull back like a balky mule!"

"While you're pulling just as hard the other way."

"You'll be sorry some day and call yourself seven kinds of a fool! It isn't every day in the week a fellow gets the chance to turn down such an offer as you've got."

"Don't you suppose I know that?" asked Dan softly, as he became aware that his disappointed friend was becoming angry.

"You'll be sorry when it's too late, I'm afraid."

"That may be true."

"It will be true! It is true! I simply can't understand how any fellow can be such a fool as to throw over a chance to go to the Tait School, especially when the chances are that he'll be the pitcher on the school nine. And, Dan," Walter continued eagerly, "there hasn't been a pitcher on the Tait School team who hasn't been a varsity pitcher after he entered college. There's Moulton, for example—oh, I'm not going to say anything more about it. If you could only see the Tait School just once you'd be perfectly willing for your old normal school to go to the hayseeds where it belongs. You



think it over. I'll see you again sometime. I'm going back to my grandfather's now."

As Walter turned away abruptly, and without once looking behind him, he was not aware that Dan remained standing in the place where the conversation had taken place and was ruefully watching his friend as he walked rapidly back to the old bridge.

"Well, Walter, what did Dan say when you told him what your father was going to do for him?" inquired Mrs. Borden cheerily as her boy entered his grandfather's house.

"He said he wouldn't do it," replied Walter somewhat tartly.

"What?"

"Yes, mother, that's exactly what he said."

"Why did he say that?"

"You can search me! Dan is as obstinate as a pig in a garden. He's the most unreasonable fellow I know anywhere."

"I'm sure you did your part. It was noble of you to want to help Dan to obtain an education. I said that to your father——"

"What did father say when you told him?" broke in Walter.

"He laughed, and all he said was Dan had fifteen hit-outs in the game."

"Strike-outs, I guess you mean, mother."

"Is there any difference between a strike and a hit? I should think they meant pretty much the



same thing. If you were to strike another boy you'd be hitting him, wouldn't you?"

"I might strike at him without hitting him."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Borden dubiously. "Well, I shouldn't let it trouble me, Walter. You were generous, I'm sure. I think it was noble of you and you made me feel very proud. Probably when your father comes up for the week-end he'll be able to persuade Dan, though it does seem a little strange that one should have to persuade a boy to take what you are giving him."

"You don't know Dan! He's the most obstinate and unreasonable boy in seven kingdoms."

"Don't be discouraged, my boy. Your father will find some way. He always does."

Whether Walter was "discouraged" or not he did not explain, though he did not go near Dan's home before the end of the week brought the return of Mr. Borden to the old homestead. His first word to his father, when Walter went in the automobile to meet him at the station, was, "Dan won't do it."

"Won't he?" inquired Mr. Borden with a smile and not seeming at all surprised.

"No, sir. He's as obstinate as an old mule."

"Perhaps it isn't quite so bad as that."

"Yes, it is! I never saw such a fellow as Dan is. He doesn't say much, but when he takes his stand you can't budge him an inch. I don't see why he turns down such a chance."



"It may be that he will change his mind. What did you say when you told him of the offer?"

"I don't remember. I didn't say very much. I just told him what you had said. Probably I didn't put it strongly enough."

Mr. Borden laughed and said, "Never mind, my boy. I'll have a little talk with Dan."

"I wish you would, father! I don't know that it will do any good, but there's no harm in trying anyway."

"Let me see—how many was it that Dan struck out in the game with the Benson nine?"

"You know already," replied Walter a trifle tartly.

"Twenty-six?"

"No, sir. Fifteen."

"That's a good record. Well, I'll see Dan soon."

Walter's eagerness and impatience increased when apparently his father forgot or ignored his promise. Not a word concerning his promised interview was said that evening nor on the morning following. It was late Saturday afternoon when Mr. Borden told his boy that he was about to go to Dan's home and that he wished to go alone.

"You'll need me," pleaded Walter. "You don't know Dan as well as I do."

"Not in the same way, is what you mean, Walter."

"I'd like to go."

"I'd be glad to have you, but it will be better



for you to stay here. If I have to do more afterward I may call in your help, but I'm sure, my boy, much as you think of Dan you would hinder more than you would help if you were to accompany me this time. I am not without hope that I'll have a good word for you when I come back. Please tell me once more, Walter, how many Dan struck out in the Benson game."

"You know already."

"So I do. It was fifteen, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is the record?"

"For strike-outs?"

"Yes."

"There have been quite a good many 'no hit' games. I don't know just what the record for strike-outs is. It might be——"

"Perhaps Dan will make it when he becomes the pitcher of the Tait School nine," suggested Mr. Borden good-naturedly. "Don't give up too easily, Walter. One never can tell what may come, but in business I have learned at least one thing which would have been of help to you if you had known it before your interview with Dan."

"What is that?"

"Never give the 'other fellow' the chance to say 'no.'"

"I don't see how you can help it sometimes."

"That's one of the things you have to learn by experience. Now I'll go over to see the great



‘strike-out’ pitcher. Let me see now; I must be sure of my ground. Was it twenty that Dan struck out?”

“I sha’n’t tell you any more that it was fifteen,” replied Walter a little crossly as he became aware that his father was good-naturedly making fun of him.

“Where will you be, Walter, when I come back?”

“Right here on the piazza.”



## CHAPTER XII

### DAN RECONSIDERS

**A**N hour had elapsed when Walter, who had not once left the piazza where he and his mother had been seated, exclaimed excitedly, "There he comes, mother! I hope he has had good luck."

"I'm sure your father has induced the foolish boy to accept his offer. He has a great way of dealing with men, though I must confess that I haven't very much sympathy with Dan. It seems to me that he has been a very foolish boy even to hesitate a moment. I'm sure he never will have another such opportunity."

"You don't know Dan, mother," said Walter as he arose and ran down the steps to greet his father. "What luck, father?" he asked eagerly. "Did you get Dan to say he would go?"

"Yes."

"Great!" shouted the excited boy. "We'll make you an honorary member of the nine! How did you do it? What did Dan say?"

"He didn't say very much."

"But he really is going?"

"You'll find him next September in your room when you go back to school."



"Tell me how you did it!"

"I can't do that just now. Isn't it enough for you to know that Dan is to enter the Tait School this fall?"

"Yes, sir; but I'd like to know how you got him to say yes."

"He won't tell you."

"And you won't, either?"

"Not just now."

"When will you tell me?"

"Perhaps at Christmas, perhaps next summer, or it may be that you never will know."

"Why not?"

"That's another thing you may never know, though I don't mind telling you that I think you will find out."

"How? When?"

"You must wait. I have succeeded in getting Dan to go to school with you. Can't you be content with that?"

"I'll have to be," said Walter, "though I'd like to know the rest. May I go over then and talk it over with Dan?"

"Of course."

"Then I'll go now!" exclaimed Walter as he ran from the piazza.

"John, what did you say to Dan?" inquired Mrs. Borden of her husband, as he seated himself in a chair beside her.

"Well, I told Dan for one thing that he was not



acting wisely in turning down the chance I gave him. I told him there was a difference between begging and receiving. That it sometimes was more gracious to receive than it was to give."

"I can't understand you, John," said Mrs. Borden a little impatiently. "One would think to hear you that it was Dan conferring the favor and not you or Walter."

"That is exactly what I did tell him," said Mr. Borden quietly.

"You did?"

"I did. I told him that I knew as well as he that Walter was an only child and spoiled by his mother——"

"I don't do any more for him than you do, John," protested Mrs. Borden.

"I know that. We both do too much. The boy would be better off if he did more for himself, but I haven't the strength of character to do what I know I ought to do. I didn't have, when I was a boy, a fraction of what Walter has. My father made me work for almost everything I had. I didn't like it then, but he was a wiser as well as a better man than I am."

"There couldn't be a more generous man than you, John."

"Couldn't there?" laughed Mr. Borden. "Well, I told Dan that I knew as well as he did that Walter is conceited and selfish—he thinks a good deal more of himself than of anyone else——"



"You didn't tell him that!"

"I most certainly did. I told him Walter needed some things that Dan had——"

"What, for example?"

"Oh, Walter doesn't work, he's too easily turned aside, he gives up when he ought to hang on, he is vain as a peacock, and he hasn't the remotest idea of the existence of anyone besides himself on this planet."

"You didn't say that about your own boy!"

"Not in those words, but Dan knew what I meant. Then I told him that he could help Walter, and I felt that if he should get my boy into a steadier way of working I'd be glad to pay him a good deal more than the amount his year at the Tait School will cost me. I put it so strongly that at last Dan agreed to try it a year. If I should not be satisfied then he is to leave the school and call off the bargain and he even suggested that he would pay back what I might have advanced——"

"He couldn't pay it. He hasn't any money."

"Not just now. He'll have plenty later. Likewise, he struck out fifteen men in the Benson game!" Mr. Borden added laughingly as he arose. "Oh, it's Walter's chance as well as Dan's, but I don't want you to tell Walter what I have just now told you. It might spoil my plan."

"I think Walter is a good boy. I can't understand you when you find so much fault with your own flesh and blood."



"Mother," said Mr. Borden softly, "sometimes it costs one more to be true than it does to say or do pleasing things. Ever think of that?"

"Of course I have, but I don't see what that has to do with Walter."

"Trust me—you will see it and more clearly than I do now."

Meanwhile Walter had gone to Dan's home, and as he entered the yard he saw his friend just coming out of the barn. He was carrying a pail of milk in each hand and his appearance, dressed as he was in his overalls and without any hat, for the first time impressed his friend with a vague sense of unfitness. What would Sinclair Bradley (called "Sin" by his fellows for more reasons than one) say if he should see Walter's new roommate in his present garb? Walter vaguely thought also of the remarks which others of his classmates might make, but his feeling of vague uneasiness speedily departed as he ran forward to greet Dan. The thought of fifteen strike-outs was vastly stronger at the moment than that of the remarks of his friends over Dan's somewhat uncouth appearance.

"Hello, Dan!" called Walter lightly as he approached. "I've heard the good news! You're going to the Tait School with me this fall."

"Yes," responded Dan quietly.

"Why don't you get excited, Dan?" Walter demanded as he walked beside his friend toward the milk-room, which was an addition to the old farm-



house, built of stone and provided with ice which Dan and his brother cut every winter from the mill-pond not far away.

"Perhaps I am, more than you think," replied Dan.

"That's all right. You're as cool when you face the prospect of rooming with me as you are when you face the heaviest hitter on the other nine and have three men on bases."

"Am I?" Dan spoke quietly, and Walter, in his own feeling of elation, perhaps failed to look beneath the surface.

"Yes. You wouldn't be, if you knew what you are going into."

"I guess you're right," said Dan soberly.

"Of course I am!" exclaimed Walter, enthusiastic once more in the company of his friend. "You'll like the fellows immensely. Right across the hall from us will be Owen Pease and Sin Bradley's room. You'll like both of them. Owen plays in the field on the nine. He's about ten feet long and two inches wide."

"I should think he'd go with Barnum. I never saw a man built on that plan."

"Oh, well, I've put it a little strong," laughed Walter. "But he's length without breadth or thickness. Honestly, Dan, he's the thinnest person you ever saw."

"But I never saw him."

"You will, soon. Thinner than anyone I ever



saw then; put it that way if you want to. When we were playing the Colt nine this spring Owen was scared, at least he said he was, to face the pitcher. He did throw a wicked ball, Dan, there's no mistake about that. I felt a little nervous myself when I faced him. But Owen made such a time over it and said he was afraid of being hit that Sin took a bat and stuck it up on the ground right in front of Owen and said, 'Here, old man, you just hide behind that and you'll be safe.' "

"Did he get all his ten feet behind one bat?"

"He might as far as his thickness was concerned. Owen is the thinnest chap I ever saw, just as I told you, but he's made of wire and steel."

"Who is this 'Sin' you speak of?"

"Sin Bradley."

"Why do you call him 'Sin'?"

"His full name is Sinclair," laughed Walter, "but I guess the name fits him all right just as it is. You never saw such a fellow in all your life, Dan. He's up to more tricks than you can dream of. One day there was a fellow on the campus who was begging, pretending he was a deaf-mute——"

"How do you know he was 'pretending'?"

"That's what I'm telling you. Sin saw through his game before the beggar could get a chance. He just walked up to him and jumped on his toes. I'm telling you, Dan, that he wasn't 'mute' for a spell there. He called Sin all kinds of names in about a thousand different languages."



"He must have been pretty well educated to use as many different languages as that."

"Oh, well, probably it wasn't quite a thousand," laughed Walter. "But the air was full of owskis and oskis there for about five minutes."

"What did Sin do?"

"He went up to the beggar, sober as a judge, and begged his pardon. He told him how deeply he regretted the 'accident' and then said, 'I feel worse about it because you are deaf and dumb. How long have you had this trouble?'

" 'More as dree year,' muttered the fellow, caught off his guard. You ought to have heard the fellows yell."

"What did the deaf-and-dumb man do?"

"Started for some vast wilderness, I guess. We heard about him afterward, though. He got on a street-car in the city the next day and he still had his big card placard on, 'Please help a poor man who is deaf and dumb.' There were some good people on the car and one of them suggested that they chip in and help the fellow. This man was a minister and he said it was a great pity that one who was so young should suffer from such a terrible affliction. The deaf-mute kept mum, pretending that he didn't hear any of the talk, but just before they turned the money over to him a big fat man got on the car and when it started it threw him against the beggar and he brought one of his big feet down hard on the mute's left foot. 'Ouch!'



yelled the beggar. 'You old fat porcupine; can't you look where you're going?'"

"What happened to the poor fellow then?" inquired Dan with a smile.

"Oh, the good people hurried him off to the police court. Sin said he would have walked a thousand miles just to see the fellow when he was brought up before the magistrate."

"How far?" said Dan quizzically.

"You're too literal, Dan," laughed Walter.

"Tell me about the teachers," said Dan after he and his friend had joined Mrs. Richards and Tom on the piazza.

"Oh, they are the finest ever!" declared Walter. "Of course they try to make you 'grind'——"

"Grind what?" inquired Mrs. Richards.

"Oh, grind at your books," said Walter lightly. "Some of them are all right, though. There's young Samson for example——"

"Is that his real name?" asked Tom.

"It is among the fellows. On the catalogue his name is Richard Lee Thomas, I believe. He was captain of the football team at college two years ago. He's the strongest fellow you ever set eyes on."

"What does he teach?" inquired Mrs. Richards.

"He coaches mostly, though he has charge of the gym work too."

"I don't understand," said Mrs. Richards simply.

"He looks after the teams and the 'physical wel-



fare of the pupils,' the catalogue says. Then there's Kaiser; he has charge of the German and French. He's a fine old boy. Soc too is good."

"Soc?" asked Dan.

"Short for Socrates," explained Walter. "He has the Latin and Greek. His real name is Jones, but the fellows all call him 'Soc' for short. 'Trig' has the mathematics. His name, I suppose, is Ephraim Jeremiah Paine, but the fellows had pity for him and changed his name to 'Trig.' Oh, they're all fine old boys. You'll have the time of your young life, Dan!"



## CHAPTER XIII

## ENTERING SCHOOL

THE summer days passed rapidly and Walter spent many of them in the company of Dan. One day while they were fishing on Six Town Pond the great snake was seen again and after a struggle was killed, though just why either of the boys wanted to kill the harmless reptile neither could have explained. "He had no business to be born a snake if he wanted to stay here," Dan said with cheerful assurance and as if his explanation was sufficient.

There were days when the fishing was excellent and other times when the efforts of the boys apparently were without avail in tempting the pickerel which hid among the weeds and refused to leave their shelter.

The return game with the Benson nine provided another day of interest and Walter greatly enjoyed the experience. Rodman and Benson both made a gala day of the occasion, and when Walter rode with the Rodman nine in the huge band-wagon which the Rodman Cornet Band kindly lent the defenders of the local name, he was deeply interested in the long line of vehicles which followed the



heroes on their way to the rival village, absorbing dust and loyalty all the way.

The game itself was more or less of a repetition of the preceding game. Dan's cunning did not fail him, and exactly the same number of hitters fell victims to his curves as had struck out in the former game. Walter's father had been in town on the great day and, at his boy's eager request, had ridden in his automobile to the scene of the contest. He was quizzically warm in his words of praise after the game, for Walter had played a better game than in the previous match, but it was his boy's enthusiasm over the youthful pitcher's "great work" that called forth Mr. Borden's deeper interest. Upon his invitation both Walter and Dan rode with him back to Rodman. Silas, the harness-maker, upon Mr. Borden's suggestion also occupied a seat in the car, and his continued praises caused Mr. Borden to enjoy his presence.

"I'm tellin' ye," roared Silas, "that Dan ought to have the New Yorks up here for one game anyway. That boy is a credit to Rodman an' everybody what lives here! He can pitch th' legs off a brass monkey! I never see such a ball-player."

"He plays a very good game," remarked Mr. Borden smiling pleasantly at Dan as he spoke. "'Aren't you afraid, Silas, that you'll spoil him with your flattering words?"

"Not a bit! Ye can't spoil Dan. I hear ye're goin' off t' school with this Borden boy, Dan."



"Yes," said Dan quietly.

"Well, education's a great thing. I wish I had some o' it."

"You have," remarked Mr. Borden.

"Who? You mean me? I may be a fool 'bout some things, but I guess I ain't such a fool as t' not know that I don't know nothin'."

"One of the wisest men that ever lived once said that he thought the men who didn't know and knew enough to know that they didn't know were very wise."

"Shucks!" sniffed Silas, his round freckled face nevertheless betraying his deep pleasure. "I guess I c'n make a harness that can stan' the strain o' five ton, but when ye've said that ye've said th' whole thing. Now, here's Walter. Th' other day I see in th' Rodman "Reflector" some newfangled words. If I rec'lect aright they was 'sick transum glory Monday'——"

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*," interrupted Walter laughingly.

"That's jes' exackly what I said," declared Silas. "I didn't know no more what they mean than 's if they been words that Julius Cæsar spoke."

"Perhaps he did," said Walter. "They are Latin words."

"Ye don't tell me. Well, Mr. Borden, I couldn't make head nor tail t' 'em. A 'sick transum' an' 'Monday' was all th' sense there was. But that boy o' yourn he come 'long an', sir, he read 'em jes'



's easy 's if he was fallin' off a log. Yes, sir. Now, ye see, he had th' education and I had none."

"What did Walter say the words meant?" inquired Mr. Borden dryly.

"I disremember, but it was something 'bout glory."

"Do you think Walter or Dan could mend a horse-collar?"

"Dan might; I'm not so sure o' your boy, that is, jes' at th' present time. Course he could learn."

"Then he'd be better educated after he had learned."

"Sewin' horse-collars isn't education!" sniffed Silas.

"I think it is or may be."

"How d'ye make that out? I never went t' school much. I c'n make out th' scores in th' Rodman "Reflector" an' I c'n chalk up th' charge for fixin' Deacon Stillman's horse-collar, but I never went t' school none whatever."

"Going to school does not necessarily mean obtaining an education."

"Go on! I guess ye're tryin' t' stuff me."

"Suppose a boy should go to school and not learn?"

"His teachers will give him th' learnin'."

"Unfortunately that is one of the things no teacher can give—at least he can't give it unless a boy takes it."

"I guess th' may be somethin' in that, same's ye



c'n lead a hoss up t' th' water but if he takes a notion he won't drink, then th' whole o' jumpin' creation can't make him swallow a cupful."

"Precisely. And a boy can be sent to the best school, but if he won't learn there's no education or power for him. I used to know some of the boys when I was in school who thought they were getting the better of their teachers when they cheated in exams, or dodged a lesson. The foolish fellows! They didn't know enough to know that they themselves were the only ones that were cheated. A school or college is a place where a boy learns, or rather can learn if he tries, how to use his brains. If he doesn't do the work then he doesn't learn—at least he doesn't learn there."

Walter was somewhat uncomfortable at the turn the conversation had taken and interrupting, he said to Silas, "Don't you think Dan will make a good pitcher for the Tait School nine?"

"'Good?'" retorted Silas instantly diverted. "'Good?' There's none better. If th' New Yorks onct got a chance t' see him work then 'twould be good-day for your school. I'm told that some o' them players get as much as ten dollars a game. D'ye s'pose that can be true?"

Walter laughed as he said, "Silas, some of them get four or five times as much as that."

"Well, Dan'll get it then."

"I believe he will do well whatever he tries to do," said Mr. Borden quietly.



"Ye're right he will. I charged Tim Long two shillin' for fixin' his tugs this mornin' an' it took me 'most two hours. If I had Dan's chance I'd be makin' four times that, I guess."

Dan, who had been the subject of much of the conversation on the way back to Rodman, seldom spoke. There was an air of seriousness about the thoughtful boy that was marked. Mr. Borden occasionally glanced at him, and there was always a quiet smile of approval whenever he did so. Whatever Walter's hopes and plans for his friend were, it was manifest that his father also had thoughts of his own, though he did not once refer to them in the presence of his boy.

At last the day arrived when Walter was to depart from Rodman. In two weeks the Tait School was to reopen and there were many things to be done in the city before he went.

Before the family left for home, Mrs. Borden was seated one evening on the piazza alone with her husband and broached a subject which had long been in her mind. "Don't you think it would be a good thing to take Dan back home with us for a few days before he enters school? You know he——"

As Mrs. Borden hesitated a moment her husband said, "You mean to teach him a few things?"

"Yes, that's just what I mean. You know Dan has not been accustomed to some things that Walter has."



"Yes, I know. What, for example?"

"Well, he hasn't had any training, at least such as Walter has had, in his table manners. Of course his mother is a good woman, but——"

"He doesn't use his knife and fork properly?"

"Yes, though that's only one thing."

"What else?"

"He needs some clothes."

"What's the matter with those he wears?"

"You know what I mean."

"They aren't cut like Walter's?"

"That's it. If I do say it, Walter always wears his clothes well."

"They ought to wear well. They cost me enough. His bill at the tailor's this spring——"

"I am not talking about the quality of his clothing."

"Oh."

"You know perfectly well what I mean."

"Perhaps I do. You're a little afraid that when Dan finds himself among a lot of boys who have been brought up in wealthy homes and who have doting mothers and perhaps very foolish fathers that he will mortify Walter by some of the things he does. I think I understand you."

"I'm thinking of Dan just as much or more than I am of Walter," protested Mrs. Borden. "He will be mortified by some things he'll do for which he is not at all to blame."

"Whose fault will it be?"



"Why—I should say not of anyone exactly. It is just that he'll have to meet new conditions, that's all. I am sure I haven't any foolish pride. I don't want Dan to suffer too much just because he doesn't understand some things."

"How much do you want him to suffer? You say you don't want him to suffer too much. Where do you draw the line?"

"I can quietly save him a good deal."

"Of course you can."

"Do you agree to his going home with us?"

"Personally I like Dan. I should be glad to have him come home with us and I am sure he would pick up and use a good many of the very useful lessons you would teach him in your own quiet way. But I'm afraid it can't be done just now. We can arrange for him to come in some vacation."

"That will be too late I'm afraid. Why can't he come now?"

"The work on the farm for one thing. He will want to do all he can to help Tom with the fall work before he leaves."

"You might hire a helper for Tom."

"Yes, I might, but for Dan's sake I don't want to. Dan must not think he is to do any less for his brother. Then too, Dan will not be slow in finding out what he ought to do in the school. He has eyes as well as brains. He has something better than either eyes or brains too."

"What is that?"



“Character. He won’t say ‘no’ and then wobble. He knows just what the two little Saxon words ‘yes’ and ‘no’ mean. I wish Walter did too, and it is the hope that Dan will help teach him that more than anything else that is making me send him to the Tait School. I’m glad to have him room with Walter.”

“You don’t think he is a brighter boy than Walter, do you?”

“No, but he has learned some things that Walter doesn’t know, and if he doesn’t learn them soon he never will. No, mother, I honestly believe it will be better for Walter to let Dan go straight to the school. If he meets the new conditions, as I believe he will, the effect on our boy will be all the better.”

“I don’t see; but if you think it is better for Walter, then I’m sure I’ll not say another word. I was thinking it would be a little easier perhaps for both of them if I had Dan home with me a few days.”

“It would be easier, but perhaps not better.”

Two weeks later Dan arrived at the Tait School. Walter already had been on the ground two days, and when his friend at last was directed to the room he was to occupy, he came with a heavy canvas bag in his hand and found himself face to face with Walter and another boy, who was introduced to him as Sin Bradley.



## CHAPTER XIV

## NEW ACQUAINTANCES

**H**ELLO—O—O, Dan!" Walter had exclaimed as he first caught sight of his friend in the doorway. "Come right in! I'm mighty glad to see you!" The impulsive Walter had leaped from the chair in which he was seated and darting to the door seized Dan by the hand, then grasped his canvas bag which he hurriedly took into the little bedroom which Dan was to occupy. Turning quickly about he said to Sinclair: "Sin, this is the new fellow I was telling you about. Stand up and do yourself proud to shake hands with Dan Richards. He's going to be the new pitcher on the Tait School nine and he'll make our opponents work some!"

"Pleased to meet you," said Sin drawlingly, as he shook hands with the new boy. The contrast between the two for the first time struck Walter almost with the force of a blow: one easy and self-possessed in his manner, dressed in the latest fashion, and having the confidence that is the result of the possession of wealth and all that money implies; the other quiet, but still somewhat self-conscious. His clothing manifestly was not made by a fashionable tailor, and his face and hands showed



the effect of his toil in the fields. For a moment Walter almost felt as if Dan must be painfully aware of his own deficiencies. But if the new-comer was abashed in the presence of Sinclair Bradley, his manner at least failed to betray it.

"I was late," said Dan simply as he responded to Sin's greeting, and then in response to Walter's suggestion seated himself in one of the large easy chairs in the room. "I guess I'm not very much of a traveler, for I stood still in the depot at Lee Junction and let my train pull out and leave me."

"You'll learn," laughed Walter a trifle noisily. "How long did you have to wait?"

"Two hours."

"That's too bad. You'll know better next time."

"How did you leave all the old folks at home?" asked Sin with a drawl.

"They were well when I left," replied Dan quietly.

"Good. How is Silas?"

"Silas who?"

"I don't know the particular individual. Just Silas, I fancy."

"Silas, the harness-maker, is in good health."

"How are the crops?"

"Pretty fair."

"Do you raise much hay?"

"Not a great deal."

"What do you do with the hay-seed?"

"We don't raise any."



"Is that so? I fancied you did. Don't all farmers raise hay-seed?"

"No," replied Dan quietly, looking calmly at Sin as he spoke.

"I confess my ignorance. You must forgive me."

Dan glanced at Walter as if he was somehow puzzled, but his dark eyes and bronzed face did not change their expression. "If you don't get into the country very often of course you have forgotten some things," he said to Sinclair. "I remember only last summer there was a family that came to Rodman to spend a few days. I didn't know them, but it seems their father was raised in our town; he went down to the city and made a lot of money. This man Silas you asked me about knew them all, though, and he explained everything to them, told them how he had helped take their grandfather to the town poorhouse and got up a donation party for the children. He described the first mule their father bought—for it seems he made his first money as a horse-trader before he began to buy hogs."

"No wonder they forgot," said Sinclair a little foolishly as he arose. "So long, Walter," he added lightly. "I'll see you again," he said to Dan and at once departed from the room.

"You were enough for him, Dan," laughed Walter.

"'Enough for him'? I don't know that I understand."



"Yes, you do."

"Walter, what does this fellow Sinclair's father do for a living?"

"I understand that he is a brewer," replied Walter a trifle uneasily.

"Is he?"

"So I hear. Why?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. How shall I get my trunk up here? Can I borrow a wheelbarrow somewhere about the school?"

"Not on your life!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"The expressman will bring it up for you. Didn't you give your trunk check to the man at the station?"

"What man? There were a good many men there."

"The expressman."

"I didn't see any. I can bring it up myself."

"Let me have your check," said Walter harshly. Dan handed his roommate his baggage check and as he did so two boys noisily entered the room and greeted Walter with a shout. "Hello, old man!" exclaimed one of them as he seized Walter's hand and shook it. The other followed his companion's example, Dan meanwhile quietly observing the two boys and feeling drawn at once to the one who had first greeted his roommate. Even before he was introduced Dan became aware that the boy was known as "Priz," though what the name implied



he did not know. The boy was a sturdy fellow, manifestly possessed of great physical strength, and his actions were so quick that they were almost catlike. The other boy was tall and slender and much more refined in his bearing. His name, or at least his nickname, Dan learned was "Chesty," though why such a slender delicate fellow should receive such a cognomen he could not at the time conjecture.

"This is my new roommate," said Walter after a brief delay, as he presented Dan. "'Priz' is the name that Ned Davis goes by," he explained with a laugh. "You want to keep on good terms with him."

"I am sure I want to," said Dan with a smile.

"He's the best boxer in the Tait School," Walter explained. "'Priz' is short for prize—prize-fighter, if you want the whole thing. We call him that for short. Priz," he added, "I guess you'll have more to do with Dan than any of the rest of us. Dan's the fellow I wrote you about this summer—striking out fifteen men, you know."

"Is that so? Well, I'm one of the catchers of the nine here and I guess you and I will come to see a good deal of each other. I hope so, anyway. I'm mighty glad you came here. It's the best school in the country."

Dan quietly acknowledged the cordial greeting and at once felt that he would like Ned Davis, for the boy was genuinely cordial and his interest in



the possibility of a new "find" for the pitcher's box was genuine.

"Chesty is short for Lord Chesterfield," Walter continued as he laughingly turned to the other newcomer. "In the catalogue his name appears as Frank Harwood Hoblit, Jr., but that's too much of a mouthful, so we cut it short to 'Chesty.' If you ever want to know what color your necktie ought to be to match your socks, or what the proper attitude is when you are addressing the President of the United States, why Chesty is the boy to give you points. He is up on all the fine points of etiquette. He is little Lord Chesterfield, just called 'Chesty' for short."

"We're not quite so bad as Walter makes us out," laughed Ned. "I never was in a fight in my life——"

"All the same you want to be good to him," broke in Walter. "He's the kind of a chap you let have the whole sidewalk and never say a word to if you happen to meet him some dark night."

"He's never out at night," said Frank. "You never saw such a fellow to sleep. He's usually in bed before the warning bell rings. I've thought sometimes I might just as well be rooming with a mummy as with him."

"I have had the same feeling," retorted Ned, "only I spelled my 'mummy' with a 'd.'"

"You're lucky to be able to spell it any way," declared Frank. "He wrote me this summer, and



what do you think? He had the nerve to spell my middle name Hardwood."

"I was thinking of Soc's efforts in your behalf," laughed Ned.

"Are all the fellows back?" he added turning to Walter. "Chesty and I just came in and we made a bee-line for your room. Seems like away back in the Dark Ages since we parted. What have you been doing all summer?"

"I've been up at Rodman most of the time, on my grandfather's farm," replied Walter.

"Buried alive?"

"No, sir; not buried alive. Dan and I fished and played ball—that's how I made my find. Dan is the best pitcher for a fellow of his age I ever saw. Moulton has been training him all summer——"

"What Moulton?" interrupted Ned quickly.

"Moulton of Princeton," said Walter, trying to speak unconcernedly. "He says Dan is the most promising young pitcher he has found."

Plainly impressed by what Walter said, Ned looked at Dan with renewed interest. He noted the long arm, the wiry form, the evident power and endurance, and his enthusiasm at once was aroused. "I'm glad you're here, Dan," he said simply. "Of course there isn't much baseball in the fall—everything goes to football then. But we have some interform games; they're mostly to keep up the spirit of the thing and try out the new fellows. We'll give you a chance to show your mettle——"



"I'm wondering if I shall have any time for baseball," said Dan simply. "I'll probably have to work so hard at my books to keep up with you——"

"You won't have to work very hard to keep up with Chesty," broke in Ned with a laugh. "It's nip and tuck between him and Walter here, and me, to see who'll lead the class if you turn it wrong end to. And yet I'm improving some," declared Ned. "I was down on the shore of Long Island this summer and took to riding a wheel. One day I was coasting down a small hill and coming at a pretty good clip, when my wheel struck a pocket of sand and I took a header before I could say Jack Robinson. A gentle, antique, old farmer and his boy happened to be passing in a farm-wagon at the time, and they both got off to see if I was hurt. 'Hurt ye much?' the old man asked me. When I told him I was all right he wanted to know how it happened, and with my exam in physics fresh in my mind I told him. I said, 'When I came down that incline and my front cylindrical means of propulsion struck that pocket of disintegrated igneous rock my velocity was such that I lost my center of gravity and was precipitated upon the hard road of asphalt.'"

"What did the old boy say?" laughed Walter.

"'Say'! For a moment that ancient and antiquated tiller of the soil was speechless. He hadn't expected to hear such nice words as I gave him.



Finally the old chap turned to his boy and gently remarked, 'Come on, bub, I guess th' fellow is one o' them tarnal foreign chaps what can't talk United States.' "

"You ought not to excoriate the venerable husbandman after your providential escape," said Frank.

"Now, I wasn't excoriating him. I'm no cannibal!" declared Ned.

"What has a cannibal to do with it?"

"Don't you know what a cannibal is?"

"I sure do. He is a chap that devours another."

"Course he is. Well, if a fellow bites another fellow's back—a sort of backbiter, so to speak—I'd like to know if he doesn't at least belong to the cannibal tribe, though I confess I don't know whether they begin their shocking repast at the back or not."

"You are brilliant to-day, Ned," laughed Walter. "How do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it. Maybe I sharpened my wits up a bit this summer with all my 'wading.'"

"Wading?"

"That's what I said, didn't I? Wading! W-a-d-ing! No, hold on, that isn't the way to spell it. W-a-d-d-ing! That's right, isn't it?"

"Depends on whether you mean wading or wadding."

"I mean wading, all right. I waded all summer long——"



“Get wet?”

“Not a drop.”

“How is that?”

“I was wading with the accompaniment of a tutor through some of the dryest books a man ever tackled.”

“You’re the same old Ned,” laughed Walter.

“I’m afraid that’s the worst of it,” said Ned somewhat ruefully. “Dan,” he added abruptly, turning to the new boy, “when will you come down to the diamond and give your mighty right arm a chance to show what it can do?”



## CHAPTER XV

## WALTER'S SUGGESTIONS

I'LL come any time you say," replied Dan.  
"All right," said Ned cheerily. "We'll fix it up in a day or two. We ought to start right in on our inter-form games and find out what material we can count on for the spring."

Several other boys dropped in and the two visitors departed. There were continued greetings among the noisy, light-hearted boys, and in spite of the fact that the work of the new year was about to begin it was manifest that most of them were glad to be back in school once more.

To Dan the entire scene was so filled with novelty that he was an interested spectator, taking but little part in the conversations that occurred whenever the boys came to his room or hailed one another on the campus. In the dining-hall, which was in a large central building to which all the boys and many of the teachers came for their meals, his interest became still more marked, for here for the first time he saw the boys who were to be his leaders in his new life. It was dusk when the boys filed out of the dining-hall, and Dan dropped behind his roommate to walk with Ned.



"I'm glad you came with Walter," Ned was saying. "We're in great need of a new pitcher. 'Red' Chandler finished his work here this spring and has gone up to Harvard. He'll make the college nine first thing, you see if he doesn't. He's a born ball-player and he had the finest assortment of curves that the Tait School ever saw. He pitched a one-hit game against the Yale freshman team in June. Never made a hit, never got a ball outside the diamond until the ninth inning, and that was a scratch. The third-baseman of the freshman team let the ball hit his bat. I don't believe he ever struck at it at all. If you can come anywhere near 'Red' you can own the whole school."

Dan listened as Ned rattled on in his noisy boyish way, but he seldom replied except to certain direct questions.

"Can you pitch a drop?" Ned asked.

"Moulton said I could."

"Good. He ought to know. Red had a 'jump' that was simply fierce. We always saved it for the third strike. And the beauty of it all was that I did not have to signal for it, so the other fellows never caught on. No signal just meant the 'jump.' You see, I had caught Red two years and we became almost like a machine."

"The boys"—Dan started to say fellows but corrected himself—"must be sorry to lose him."

"They are. Last summer when we shut up shop we all felt as if we had lost our best friend when



Red left us. He certainly was a wonder! But if you can measure up to him or come anywhere near, you'll wear diamonds here till you graduate—and forever after, for that matter."

"And if I don't?"

"Why—you'll be all right. Sometimes you know a fellow gets a name for doing wonders in the place he comes from, but he finds out after he has been here a spell that—well, that the conditions aren't just exactly the same. See, don't you?"

"Yes," said Dan quietly.

"It's just this way—you've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. If you can make good——"

"I'm afraid Walter has talked me up more than I deserve," broke in Dan. "He's a good friend——"

"How long have you known him?"

"Ever since we were little fellows. He has been spending his summers on his grandfather's farm, and our farm was close by, so Walter and I naturally were together a good deal. This summer he hired me to take him fishing."

Ned's keen glance of surprise was not lost upon his companion, but as he did not speak Dan too became silent as the two boys followed Walter and Chesty, who were not far in advance. In the silence suddenly the words of the latter to Walter became plain to Dan and Ned. "Where did you pick up your bucolic?" Chesty was saying.

"Picked him up in the hayfield," Walter laughingly replied.



"His hair is full of hayseed."

"Well, what of it?"

"Oh, nothing. If that is the sort of thing you like, then you like just the sort of thing you've got, that's all."

"He can pitch like a fiend."

"What of it?"

"He'll own the whole school pretty soon if he can measure up to Red Chandler!"

"Red Chandler!" retorted Chesty scornfully. "He was just another such fellow as your friend from the hayfield. He didn't know how to act like a gentleman. He was just a great, rough——"

"He's the best pitcher the Tait School nine ever had!"

"What of that? He used to say, 'I done it.' He never had a suit of clothes that fitted him. He was not and never could be a gentleman."

It was too dark to permit Ned to see Dan's face and yet he was aware that his companion must have heard Chesty's words. Impulsively he turned to Dan and said, "Don't pay any attention to what that Chesty has been saying. He doesn't know anything except what a tailor can tell him. He doesn't know what he is here for. He thinks his money can buy anything. You don't mind his chaff, do you?"

"I haven't had much time to find out yet," replied Dan quietly.

"Well, don't you mind it! I'll tell Chesty what I think of him."



"No, don't say a word. Don't let him know that we heard what he said. I don't want Walter to know."

"Just as you say," said Ned lightly. "If I can arrange with Samson I'll get the fellows out for a little baseball to-morrow. You aren't going in for football are you?"

"I don't expect to."

"Good! Of course football is all the rage in the fall. It's a good enough game, but give me baseball every time."

"I never saw a game of football."

"How's that?" laughed Ned lightly. "Where have you lived all these days?" Then as Dan did not reply he hastily added, as he recalled the sneering words of Chesty, "There'll be time enough for all that. I just don't want you to get switched off into football, that's all. Of course we'll have to wait till spring before we do much on the diamond. Football somehow has got the right of way in the fall, but we do a little trying out now, and that's about all we can expect. I'll let you know to-morrow about the practice. Now don't fail to show up. And just forget all about Chesty and his cheap talk."

Dan did not respond, but turned with Walter and went up the stairway to their room on the second floor. He did not betray by his manner that he had overheard the words of Chesty to Walter, and as the latter suggested that they should at once



arrange their belongings in their rooms he quietly agreed. Dan's trunk, a somewhat crude and manifestly antique affair, had been left outside the door and when Walter said, "Here, Dan, I'll give you a lift," and at once took hold of one end of the trunk, Dan somehow felt that his roommate was more eager to get the trunk into a bedroom where it could not be seen than he was to help. Dan, without a word, helped carry the heavy trunk to the bedroom which had been assigned him and as soon as Walter started to unpack his own trunk he too began.

There were three rooms in the suite, a bedroom for each boy and a sitting-room or study which both were to use. In spite of the simplicity and plainness of the furnishings—a condition duly emphasized by the school catalogue—Dan's feeling was that he was surrounded by luxury. Certainly everything was unlike the plainness of his own little home on the farm near Rodman. The thought increased Dan's feeling of depression. He had a vision of his brother Tom, who by this time had ended his chores and doubtless was sitting with his mother on the piazza, talking with her over their loneliness. He fancied he almost could hear his mother in her calm way, which was deceptive to many by its very calmness, say to Tom that she was glad Dan had such a good opportunity to secure an education. He wondered what she would say if she knew his own feelings at the moment. The



sneering remarks of Chesty had cut deep. Up to this time Dan had not been aware that his manners or dress were very different from those of others.

Now that he had, for the first time in his life, been thrown into the midst of a crowd of boys of his own age, all of whom possessed, or at least seemed to possess, an indefinable something which he was aware was lacking in his own person, he felt strongly that something was wrong. Ned had been cordial, but his keen interest in the possibility of the nine securing a good pitcher doubtless accounted for that. Chesty had spoken frankly and without a suspicion that his words had been overheard. And Dan, in his quiet way, was suffering. His life had not been like that of the boys in the Tait School. He almost wished that he had not yielded to Mr. Borden's persuasive words. At the normal school there were many who came from homes like his own. Several boys from Rodman had worked their way through that school. They had been waiters in the dining-room or cared for the grounds, served as aids to the janitor or had done various other humble duties by which they helped themselves.

Dan's thoughts were busied with these things while he unpacked, until at last his trunk was empty and its contents bestowed where they belonged. One of the last things he had found in the trunk was a study gown upon which his mother had labored evenings after the tasks of the day were



done. The sight of it recalled her love and devotion so vividly that Dan threw aside his coat and donned the long odd garment before he responded to Walter's call and came into the sitting-room.

"Got everything done, Dan?" said Walter cheerily. "Can I help you any? For the love of country, Dan," Walter abruptly added as for the first time he noticed his roommate's gown, "where on earth did you find that thing? What is it? Did you use it to milk in?"

"It's a study gown," replied Dan, blushing slightly.

"Well, don't study in it, Dan. If the fellows should see it they'd never stop guying you. It looks like a relic of the Stone age. Here, help me tack up this skin. Isn't it a beauty?" Walter held up to view the skin of the huge snake which he and Dan had secured on Six Town Pond and Walter had had prepared by Silas the harness-maker.

"Isn't that a beauty!" he again exclaimed enthusiastically when the skin had been tacked to the wall. "That'll make the fellows stand up and open their eyes. I wonder what Chesty will say when he sees it? By the way, Dan, do you want me to give you a pointer?"

"Go ahead."

"Why—well—you see the ways of the fellows here are not just exactly as they are in Rodman, you know."

"Yes, I know."



“Well, you want to put your butter on the butter-plate and not on the rim of your serving-plate. You don’t mind my speaking of it, do you? You’ll pick these things up in a jiffy, but I thought—I didn’t know—but you’d like to have me tell you when I happened to see some little thing that is not just like—that’s a little different——”

“That’s all right, Walter. I know I’m not used to some things that you and Chesty——”

“Never mind Chesty,” broke in Walter a little uneasily as Dan believed. “There are quantities of points you can give me—a good many more than I can give you. They’re only little pointers. I say, Dan, I’ve been talking you up with a lot of the fellows. They are expecting you to do something big to-morrow if we have the fellows out for practice then. You won’t go back on me, will you, Dan?”

“I’m afraid you have talked too much.”

“Not a bit!” declared Walter confidently. “You can do it! Just think you’ve got some of those Benson fellows facing you! I tell you what, Dan! If you make good the fellows will all be so glad that I made my ‘find’ this summer that they’ll make me captain of the nine next year.”



## CHAPTER XVI

## A SCRUB GAME

THE following day proved to be rainy and the "trying out" of the prospective ball-players was consequently impossible. The day was filled, however, with novelty to Dan, who was assigned to the same class or form to which Walter belonged. This was as Mr. Borden had hoped and it may have been that a letter from him to the head master may have had something to do with his grading.

In the Tait School there were seven buildings. Four of these were dormitories; two were superb buildings arranged for classroom work and containing a great hall in which at eleven o'clock every morning the students assembled for chapel; the remaining building was the refectory or dining-hall. Beyond the buildings was the great athletic field. The football and baseball fields were surrounded by a cinder track. Tennis-courts were numerous and the entire plant had been deeply impressive to Dan when Walter first had led him to the field. The sight of the covered grand stand and of the tiers of "bleachers" that extended along either side of the field also had moved the new boy



strongly. The sight had suggested the scene which a game would present. Dan thought he could see the excited spectators and even hear their shouts of approval. Was it possible that he could be the pitcher—the central figure in the nine toward which the eyes of all would be turned? For the first time the country boy had a feeling of depression. He had never been put to the test of facing experienced batters. It was true he had been phenomenally successful against the Benson and other local nines. But they were as inexperienced as he. Then he recalled the quiet and confident words of Moulton. “If you keep on, Dan, you are going to be one of the best college pitchers. I shall follow you for a year or two and keep watch of your work. If you do what I believe you will, we’ll be sure to fix your college course all right.”

Dan had not fully understood just what Moulton meant, but as he recalled his words now they were wonderfully comforting. He would do his best to show Moulton that all his aid had not been wasted.

“You’re a new boy too, aren’t you?”

Dan, who was walking across the campus on his way to his room, looked up as he heard the question and saw before him a slight delicate boy, apparently about fourteen years of age, though he was smaller than most boys of that age.

“Yes, I’m a new boy,” replied Dan smiling as he spoke and stopping to wait for the lad to join him. “Are you new too?”



"Yes. I just came last night. It's the first time I have ever been away from home." The lad's eyes were moist and Dan's sympathy was at once aroused. He understood the feelings of his companion, though he had different ways of expression.

"First time I've ever been away from home too," he said with a smile.

"Is it?" inquired the lad, interested at once. "Which form are you in?"

"Second."

"I'm only in the fourth. You'll have only two years here."

"And you'll have four."

"Yes," the boy responded, as if the prospect was far from pleasing. "My name is Carlton Hall. What is yours?"

"Dan Richards. Where do you live?"

"Brooklyn."

"I live away up in the country. I never expected to have a chance to come to this school——"

"Do you like it?" interrupted the boy.

"It must be a wonderful place," replied Dan quietly. "You and I will both have to keep before us all the time what it means to be students in the Tait School."

"Yes," assented Carlton feebly. "Do you know I am glad I have to study with the teachers. I'd get lonesome if I didn't. You see, I room alone——"

"Study with the teachers?" broke in Dan. "What do you mean?"



"Don't you know? Why the first-form boys are allowed to do all their work in their rooms, unless they get too low a standing in their exams. Then the fellows in the second form who stand in the first division are allowed to study in their rooms too. All the rest have to study every afternoon and evening in one of the study rooms."

"I didn't know about that."

"That's the way it is. Won't you come over and see me pretty soon?" inquired Carlton wistfully.

"Where do you room?"

"In Boyd Hall, number seven. It's the single room at the head of the stairs, in the south entry."

"I'll be glad to come," Dan promised readily. The unspoken appeal in the big blue eyes could not be resisted. "Come over and make a call on me. I'm in nine, Badger Hall—west entry."

"Do you room alone?"

"No, Walter Borden rooms with me."

When Dan entered his room he found Walter and Ned both there, and as soon as they saw him Walter exclaimed, "What do you think, Dan? We've got a proposition to form a school league."

"Have you?"

"You're right we have. I don't understand why it hasn't been done long ago. Four schools, St. John's, the Greystone Military School, the Atlas High School, and the Military Academy at Dundee. Of course, we'll find some muckers in the high-



school nine, but they can play ball. It'll be a great scheme. Whichever wins the championship of the league has got the State interscholastic championship too, for there isn't another school in the State that can touch any one of the four. It's too late to take in football, but we'll have that next fall. It will bring us right into line for the baseball and track and tennis in the spring. Perhaps we can fix things up in time for hockey and basket-ball this winter——"

"Hold on, Walter," interrupted Dan. "You go too fast for me. I guess I don't quite understand."

"Why, you see it's this way," explained Ned. "These four schools are near one another and they put up the best article in the way of athletics in the State. We have games every year anyway, but by this new arrangement we have a league, you see. There'll be regularly scheduled games and the nine or the team that wins out will get a pennant. It will be able to claim too, the championship of the State. It's a great scheme and there's only one drawback; I don't mean a drawback exactly, I mean there's only one question——"

"What's that?" demanded Walter.

"Why, it's the question of Dan. If he can make good as the pitcher of the Tait School nine it will be all right——"

"You don't want to go into the league unless you can get that pennant? Is that it?" asked Dan quietly.



"I'd rather go in if we can win," laughed Ned.

"Somebody will have to come out last," suggested Walter.

"'Strange but true,'" laughed Ned. "I am aware of that marvelous fact, but after Red's work last year—why, Dan, the Military Academy got only one hit and that was on account of an accident in the ninth inning——"

"So you've told us a million times or more," broke in Walter irritably. "Don't tell us that old story again. I'll back Dan. He'll give you all you want."

"I'm sure, for the sake of the nine, I hope he will," said Ned good-naturedly. "That's all I want."

"He'll do it," said Walter confidently.

"I've been talking with Samson," said Ned, "and he says we can begin the inter-form games next week. The first game will be between the first and second forms, fellows. I'll tell you, Dan, that Gus Kiggins—he's the first-form pitcher—will put you on your mettle. He's been substitute pitcher on the school nine two years, and he's sore because Red Chandler came in last year and won out as the regular pitcher. He doesn't know that you are here or that you can pitch——"

"He will at the end of the first inning," declared Walter.

"I hope so, with all my heart."

"Look here," said Dan in a low voice, "you



aren't going to put me in as the pitcher of the second-form nine, are you?"

"Correct," said Ned.

"But you haven't tried me. You don't know whether I can do it or not. I don't know myself——"

"I do," said Walter.

Dan shook his head as he said quietly, "Walter is not the best judge."

"I'm captain of the second-form nine," said Ned. "I'll give you a chance to make good. If you don't——"

"What then?" inquired Dan.

"Why, you'll retire in favor of your successor, that's all."

"You must see what my work is first," said Dan firmly.

"Just what I intend to do. It'll be clear tomorrow and we will get up a scrub game on the campus at two-thirty. We'll have the diamond all to ourselves, for most of the fellows will want to see what the prospects for the eleven are. They'll be down watching the football practice and we'll have the field to ourselves."

"How about Gus Kiggins? Will he come out?" inquired Walter.

"No. He's out for half-back on the eleven this fall. I guess he'll make it too," replied Ned. "All the better if he doesn't show up."

"He'll pitch for the first form, won't he?"



"You can rest easy about that," laughed Ned. "Gus will be on deck then. He loves the spotlight."

"He is all right too," said Walter.

"Yes, he can play ball. He'll be the pitcher of the school nine, unless Dan goes him one better."

"Dan will do it all right," asserted Walter, although even Dan somehow felt there was a slight note of anxiety in his roommate's apparent confidence.

Promptly at half past two the following afternoon Dan and Walter went to the field. Ned had had his difficulties in securing sufficient players to make up two nines, so keen was the interest of the school in learning what the outlook for the eleven was likely to be. However, after a time, two nines were obtained and preparations for the scrub game were completed.

"Dan, you can't pitch in those clothes!" protested Walter as his roommate seated himself on the bench. "Where's your uniform?"

"What uniform?"

"Why, the one you used in Rodman."

"I left that with that study gown you didn't like."

Walter's face flushed slightly as he said: "But Dan, you don't understand how much depends on the impression you make on Ned and the other fellows to-day. Let me get you——"

Walter rose abruptly to go to the dressing-room of the club-house, but as he did so Dan said quietly,



"No frills to-day, Walter. This is only a scrub game anyway."

"No, it isn't, at least as far as you are concerned!"

"I'm going into the game just as I am," said Dan in a low voice. "I notice that some of the boys are not wearing uniforms."

"They don't need to. They can't play ball. But it's different with you, Dan. I've been backing you up——"

"Never mind, Walter. If I don't show any signs of greatness it will be all right, however it comes out. If I don't show that I can do anything I'll feel better——"

"All right. Have it your own way," retorted Walter sulkily. "I can't do anything more. You'd do better if you had the shoes——"

It was Walter's turn at the bat and as his name was called he turned abruptly to the home plate.

"You're next," said Ned to Dan, as Walter made a hit and gained his base. "Can you bunt? If you can, let me see you sacrifice Walter to second."

Dan's "sacrifice hit," however, consisted in a long high fly to deep center. The fielder, evidently an inexperienced player, misjudged the ball and Walter ran home, while Dan rested on third base.

"You ought to have done what I told you," said Ned sharply when Dan came home a little later. "You would have been out if there had been a good



fielder in center and the chances are you'd have doubled up Walter too."

"I took the chance," said Dan quietly. "I knew the fellow couldn't field."

"Well, watch my signals now," said Ned tartly, as the side was out and he and Dan started for their position in the field.



## CHAPTER XVII

## A TRY-OUT

IT was so early in the school year that opportunities for talking over the new boys had of necessity been limited. The fact that Walter had a new roommate who was somewhat "green" had been noticed and smilingly commented upon, but what he was able to do in the school life was unknown. Indeed, with the exception of two or three of Walter's closest friends, to whom he had enthusiastically described Dan's success as a pitcher, the matter had not been referred to.

As the football team claimed the chief interest of the school at this time there were only a few besides the two scrub nines present when the game began, a fact for which Dan was deeply thankful.

"Your agricultural friend is as strong as an ox and he has a good swing with his bat, but he hasn't any more idea of team work than he has of trout-fishing in Mars," Ned in a low voice had said to Walter as the latter passed him to take his position as short-stop. "We'll see now what he can do."

"Yes; you keep your eyes open," retorted Walter confidently. Dan caught the ball which Walter



threw him and then in turn began to throw it about the diamond. He had not had an opportunity to warm up and several weeks had elapsed since he had had a ball in his hand. To most of the players the game was only a "scrub" anyway, but to Dan, as no one realized more fully than he, there were larger issues at stake. His quiet manner, however, was unchanged and only Walter was aware how eager his friend was to do well.

The opposing batter now advanced to the plate and Dan caught the ball, settled back in the pitcher's box, swung his arm once or twice, and then pitched the ball. His action was not graceful and the ball was not swift.

The batter struck at it, but failed to hit it, although the failure apparently was due to his own weakness. A straight swift ball produced a second strike, and then in accordance with the signals and plan of action to which Ned and Dan had agreed before they assumed their positions in the field, the pitcher sent in his "pet," a form of delivery to which Moulton had devoted much time and pains.

The ball sped swiftly as it left Dan's hands and though it came fairly over the plate the batter stepped back as if in fear of being hit.

"Here, you timid creature, why don't you strike at a good ball when you get it?" demanded Ned sharply of the batter.

"It didn't come within a mile of the plate," retorted the batter.



"Come here, Chesty!" called Ned, turning to the spectators. "Come on and umpire this game. This fellow can't tell whether the ball is going to hit him or whether it started in the other direction."

"Yea, I'll do that," responded "Lord Chesterfield" as he arose, carefully brushed his clothes with his hands, and took the position to which he had been called.

"Two strikes on this fellow," said Ned as he replaced his mask and gave his chest-protector a pull. "Now go ahead. Call it two balls. I don't know just how many he deserves." Signaling to Dan to repeat his last effort Ned stretched forth his hands for his pitcher to begin again.

Once more Dan sent in a swift inshoot, that as it came to the plate suddenly appeared to turn and vindictively try to hit the player at the bat.

"Three balls," called Chesty glibly.

Ned glared at him as in duty bound, but did not speak as he returned the ball to Dan.

"Four balls! Take your base!" shouted Chesty once more, after Dan had pitched another ball.

Ned started to protest, but a low laugh from Dan caused him to check the word he was about to speak and he returned the ball.

The second boy to bat obtained the same result as his predecessor, and two were on bases.

"Careful, Dan," called Walter in a low voice from his position as short-stop. "Take it easy. Don't try too hard."



Dan did not reply, but swinging about he threw the ball swiftly to second base and the runner was caught at least two feet away.

"That's the way to do it!" called Ned. "Now look sharp and we'll have this fellow on strikes," he added as the third boy advanced to the plate.

Dan responded with a ball so swift and unexpected that Ned dropped it.

"Ball!" shouted Chesty. And as Dan sent in three more that came with equal speed, he declared that each was a ball and allowed the batter to take his base.

"What's the trouble, Dan?" called Walter.

"Nothing," responded Dan.

"Get them over the plate."

"They are," said Dan quietly. "Your umpire can't see straight." However, Dan apparently did not try to pitch his best. He retired the side after one run had been made and twice the ball had been hit into the infield.

"No use," he explained to Walter as they walked in together. "The fellow either can't or won't see. I'll just give them easy ones and let them go."

"No; don't do that. Chesty will see after a bit," protested Walter. But Dan was perverse and for several innings pitched a slower ball which occasionally was hit, though most of the boys that faced him struck out.

"I don't know," said Ned to Walter, after an hour had elapsed. "He has speed if he lets him-



self out, but he's as wild as a hawk. Doesn't seem to know just where the plate is or what it is for."

"Dan says Chesty can't or won't see."

"Here come the fellows from the football field," said Ned quickly, as the eleven were seen approaching on their way to the dressing-room. "I'm going to ask Gus Kiggins and some of the fellows to come in and bat. There's Samson too," he added. "I'll have him call strikes and balls. We'll see now what we'll see."

In response to Ned's call four of the boys stopped and acting upon Ned's suggestion quickly agreed to face Dan. The physical instructor good-naturedly agreed to decide as to the balls and strikes and took a position behind Ned.

The scrub game had served to "warm up" Dan and, as Walter keenly watched him, more eager than he would have acknowledged to have his words of praise proved true, he smiled as he noticed that Dan settled back in a way he recognized and understood. Whenever Dan had his present expression Walter had no fear.

Hodge, the heavy right tackle on the football team and the heaviest hitter on the school nine, smilingly grasped a bat and faced the pitcher. Gathering himself together Hodge struck at the first ball Dan sent in, but his bat failed to reach the elusive little sphere and he joined in the laugh that greeted his efforts.

"Look out, Hodge," called Gus Kiggins. "It'll



come back and hit you!" His tones were bantering and it was plain that he was not looking upon the work of the new boy in any serious way.

Again Dan sent in the ball, this time even swifter than before, but as it reached the plate it suddenly seemed to rise in the air and Hodge struck several inches beneath it. An expression of surprise, almost of chagrin, appeared upon the face of the tall player and as he looked again at Dan there was an added element of interest in his expression.

Once more the pitcher turned himself about and Hodge braced himself for even a swifter ball, but in spite of Dan's contortions the ball slowly rose and Hodge had struck at it long before it had crossed the plate.

"You're out!" called Samson sharply to the batter, though he was looking keenly at Dan as he spoke.

"Come on, Smith. Try your luck," said Hodge to one of the other boys who was standing with a bat in his hand awaiting his turn.

Smith, stout, stolid, manifestly possessed of great strength, advanced laughingly to the plate and keenly watched Dan. He struck viciously at the first ball and a long foul followed. He lunged at the next ball, but it seemed to dodge his bat. He looked again at the pitcher, grasped his bat more firmly, and then swung quickly at the ball which Dan sent in with his utmost strength. "Strike!" called Samson, then turning to the catcher, who had



dropped the ball, he said, "What's the trouble, Ned? Can't you hold him?"

"Go ahead," replied Ned grimly, bracing himself.

Again the ball came swiftly, but Smith once more failed to hit, and when Dan repeated his experiment with Hodge by sending a slow ball and the batter struck at it long before it reached him Smith good-naturedly exclaimed as he threw down his bat, "No use, fellows. You can't find the ball."

Gus Kiggins now walked to the plate. Without knowing who was facing him, Dan felt that there was opposition keen and strong expressed in the face of the player. The interest of all in the little group of spectators was aroused now, and Walter, whose delight at Dan's feat in striking out the two heavy hitters of the school nine was unconcealed, was watching the young pitcher with increasing eagerness. If Gus Kiggins could be struck out too! "Dan," he said in a low voice, "give Gus a low drop. He can't hit a low ball."

Without betraying whether or not he had heard the suggestion, Dan looked keenly at the batter and then sent in a sudden and terrifically swift ball that crossed the plate before Gus had fairly drawn back his bat. The ball was quickly returned by Ned, and again, with his sudden quick swing, Dan threw the ball before Gus was fully aware.

"Two strikes!" called Samson in a low voice.

"You're doing nobly!" laughed Hodge as he watched the batter. "Look out for that third



strike! The ball has a habit of stopping somewhere up in the air and waiting for you to strike at it before it decides to come on."

"I'll wait for it," retorted Kiggins and a moment later he lunged heavily at the ball which Dan threw with terrific speed.

"Three strikes! You're out," declared Samson.

"That's enough," said Dan as he dropped the ball and started from the field.

"Give us another round. You caught us off our guard," called Kiggins. Without a protest, Dan once more picked up the ball, called to Ned to take his position behind the bat, and prepared to resume his work.

Again in order the three players faced the new boy, but with the exception of a high foul which Hodge raised, not one was able to hit the ball.

"Come on, fellows!" called Walter as he raced in from the field. "This is enough. I've grown stiff waiting for a ball to come my way. It wouldn't make any difference if you came to bat a dozen times. It would be the same thing right over again." Walter's elation at Dan's success was great now. The three heavy hitters of the school nine had each struck out twice in succession as they tried to hit the ball.

The face of Gus Kiggins was a study. Anger, chagrin, rage—all were expressed in it. The sight caused Walter to laugh, for he thought he understood the feelings of the burly player. His in-



terest was keener when he saw that Samson had advanced to Dan and was speaking warmly to him. Ned, a moment later, joined the two and his enthusiasm was unconcealed.

"Where did the country bumpkin come from?" asked Gus Kiggins of Walter.

"Oh, I found him this summer. He struck out fifteen in one game! He's a wonder! I guess we'll all feel that the Tait School has somebody to take Red's place now."

But Gus was scowling and looking at the new boy with unconcealed anger. "Never mind, Gussie," continued Walter in mock sympathy. "We'll let you carry the bats for the nine if you'll be good."

At that moment Dan approached the group, and as he drew near the expression of contempt which he saw on the face of Gus Kiggins caused him to stop and look inquiringly at his roommate.



## CHAPTER XVIII

## A NEW PITCHER

UNAWARE of the expression on the face of Gus Kiggins, Walter said to Dan as the latter joined the group, "Didn't I tell you? You're all right, Dan." Then, turning to his companions, he continued: "I always keep my eyes open for the nine. You fellows seem to think the eleven is the only team in school, but when I can find a pitcher for the nine, such as I have in Dan Richards, I'm telling you that you'll forget there is such a game as football when you see what the baseball nine will do for us."

"There's a better way yet," said Gus, looking boldly at Walter as he spoke.

"What's that?"

"Hire two or three professionals," sneered Gus.

"We don't want them."

"Might as well have them as to have 'muckers.'"

The face of Gus was glowering, and his feeling was manifest to all.

"We have some muckers already," retorted Walter hotly. He was angry at the reflection upon his choice perhaps even more than at the slight cast upon Dan. He glanced hastily at his roommate,



and from Dan's unchanged manner he concluded that he either did not know what a mucker was or did not apply the epithet to himself.

"Who's a mucker?" demanded Gus as he stopped and faced Walter. "Do you mean to tell me that I——"

"I am not mentioning any names," broke in Walter with a sneer. "When a fellow is a mucker he doesn't have to run around and wave a banner. It is usually stamped on his face. If it isn't, give him a chance to open his mouth and he'll do the rest."

The boys laughed at Walter's retort and as they looked at Gus it was plain that their sympathies were not with him. Several glanced slyly at Dan, but to all appearances he was the least-moved boy in the group.

"There isn't a mucker in the Tait School," said Gus savagely, "or at least there hasn't been up to to-day. Every fellow pays his way like a man and he has something behind him too!"

"What do you mean?" asked Walter tauntingly, aroused still more by the manifest sympathy of his companions. "How far back does a fellow have to go not to be a mucker? Now, would you think that a fellow whose father stuck pigs——"

"Say that again," broke in Gus, his face livid and his fist drawn back, "and I'll show you."

"Yes," taunted Walter, "that is the way some fellows take to show that they are not muckers."



It was common report in the school that the father of Gus Kiggins, who now was a prosperous pork-packer, had begun his successful career as one of the men employed by the establishment in which he now was a partner. It was a well-known fact that he had been one of the "hands" whose sole occupation was slaughtering hogs.

"I'll leave it to the fellows—no, I'll leave it to this fellow himself," shouted Gus, as he stopped and faced Dan, his companions also stopping at the same time.

"Leave what to him?" demanded Ned.

"Whether what I say is true or not."

"That you're a mucker?" asked Walter with a sneer.

"No, sir. I'll just ask him one or two questions, and if he answers them, then I'll never say another word if they're not my way. If they prove what I claim, then I'll leave it with you fellows."

"Oh, take a rest, Gus. Calm down," said Hodge. "You talk too much."

"Let him ask his questions," said Dan quietly.

"He hasn't any right to question you," declared Smith. "He hasn't any more right than Hodge has or I have. No, nor than you have to ask him questions."

"Don't stop him. I'll answer two questions for him if he'll let me ask him two after he's done with me," said Dan.

"That's fair. Go ahead, Gus," said Hodge.



"All right," said Gus, promptly turning to Dan. "My first question is, Do you pay for your term-bills in the Tait School or does someone else pay for them? I know it's none of my business in one sense of the word——"

"Of course it's none of your business!" broke in Walter. "No one but a mucker would ever ask a question like that anyway!"

For a moment Gus glared at the speaker, but as Hodge and Smith instantly stepped in front of him, no damage, at least physically, was done. "You don't have to answer such a fool question as that," said Hodge, turning to Dan.

"I don't mind answering it," said Dan, apparently unmoved. "I don't mind telling you that I don't pay my bills here."

"There! That's just what I thought!" shouted Gus and he was quick to mark the effect of Dan's acknowledgment. It was manifest that the reply of Dan had somewhat dampened the ardor of the boys. "Now, I've got just one question more."

"It'll keep," said Smith curtly.

"Let me hear it," protested Dan.

"I won't ask you who pays your bills," continued Gus, "but I will ask you this: Now, honestly, wasn't it because you're a good pitcher that this unknown benefactor of yours offered to pay your way through the Tait School?"

"Don't answer his question, Dan!" spoke up Walter hastily.



Ignoring the protest Dan looked straight into the face of his accuser and said: "I shall have to say both yes and no. I'll own up that if I hadn't been a—if some people hadn't thought I could pitch a little—probably I wouldn't be here now. But I know too, that that isn't the only reason why——"

"That's all I want," interrupted Gus triumphantly. "You own up that you don't pay your own way, and you can't deny that someone has offered to send you because you think you can pitch a little. That's all I claimed. I haven't anything against you, you understand, but I rather guess that Doctor Sprague won't stand for such things. The Tait School has too good a name to spoil it now by hiring m—professionals," he hastily interrupted himself.

The boys glanced slyly at Dan, but he was silent. His face flushed and it was plain that the brutal words had cut deeply, although he tried not to show it. Turning sharply, Hodge said:

"Richards, did you ever get money for playing ball?"

"Not a cent!" spoke up Walter hastily.

"Let him answer for himself," said Gus.

"No, I never was paid for a game," answered Dan quietly.

"That settles it," declared Smith.

"No, it doesn't settle it," almost shouted Walter.

"I'll tell you fellows just how it was——"

"Please don't," interrupted Dan.



"I'm going to tell," persisted Walter, ignoring his roommate's words. "I'll tell you just how it was. Dan lives on a farm that is next to my grandfather's at Rodman. I've known him ever since we both were kids. Four years ago his father died, and Dan and his brother Tom have been running the farm ever since. Of course, a fellow that runs a farm nowadays doesn't get the chance to make as much money as some men do, but Dan and Tom have managed to live and get a little ahead too. They knew there was some money to be made——"

"On a farm?" broke in Gus with a sneer.

"Yes, sir; on a farm!" retorted Walter hotly.

"I'd like to know what they raised," sneered Gus.

"I'll tell you—they raised hogs!" said Walter.

"You ought to know that hogs pay if there's anyone in the school that knows it."

A shout arose from the boys, but Gus only glowered at Walter. In a moment the latter continued: "Dan decided this summer that he would take the little money he had made and saved by raising hogs and doing other little jobs, like rowing for the men that wanted to go fishing on Six Town Pond, and go to school. He had about decided that he would go to the normal school, for he'd have a chance there to work and pay for part of his board, and there wasn't any tuition to pay for anyway. My father heard of Dan's plan and he told him that if he would room with me and do me good he



would send him to the Tait School. Now, the way I look at it, it's Dan who is doing the favor——"

"Of course he is!" broke in Hodge warmly. "It was mighty good of him to come, I think. I guess if he hadn't shown that he had that 'fade-away' ball Gus wouldn't have kicked. It's too bad, Gussie," he added with a laugh, as he turned to his companion. "You're a near-pitcher anyway, and that's something, you know."

"Why didn't you go out and hire some professional to take Ned's place as catcher?" demanded the angry Gus.

"Oh, Ned's all right. He'll learn how to hold the new pitcher when he has had a little more practice." Hodge looked at Ned, who had been thoughtfully silent throughout the quarrel, and laughed as he spoke.

"I don't believe in it!" declared Gus, "and I'll bet you that Doctor Sprague won't either, when he finds out about it."

"Run and tell him now, Gussie," suggested Smith.

"I'm no telltale."

"All right, then," said Smith. "If Doctor Sprague doesn't hear of it, we'll believe you."

"He'll know without my telling him."

"Oh, no he won't, Gussie boy."

"Yes, he will," said Dan quietly.

"Who'll tell him?"

"I shall."

"You!" exclaimed Gus.



“Yes,” replied Dan. “I don’t want to play on the nine if there is any question about my right.”

“You’re all right,” said Hodge. “All you have to do is to saw wood.”

“I guess he can do that,” sneered Gus.

“He can, if he can do it as well as he can pitch—or stick hogs!” retorted Walter.



## CHAPTER XIX

## SCHOOL LIFE

YOU stirred up the animals, Walter," said Hodge after Gus had taken his departure. Don't do it any more. Gussie is all right enough if you don't bear on too hard. Look at the shoulders on him. No wonder he's the next to the best boxer in school. The trouble with him is that he counted upon being the pitcher on the school nine next spring, that's all. It's a little bit rough, you know, to be waked up by an earthquake."

"He stands about as much chance of being pitcher as I do of being King of Timbuctoo or of Oshkosh," sniffed Walter.

"He doesn't have a ghost of a show if Richards can do again what he did to-day,—strike out the three heaviest hitters on the nine," laughed Ned.

"Yes, and strike out each of them twice in succession," added Walter.

"Good work, old man!" said Hodge affectionately patting Dan on the shoulder. "We'll leave you here. Look out for Gus. If he meets you alone some dark night he may pitch into you."

"Hello, Carlton," said Dan, as he and his roommate were about to enter their hall. "What's



wrong?" The little fellow's face was pale and it was manifest that he had been crying.

"Somebody poured water in my bed," said Carlton. "My room is all mussed up too. I—I think I'll——"

"You'll what?" asked Dan kindly as the boy hesitated.

"I—I think I'll write my mother and ask her to let me come home."

"No, no. That isn't the way. I'll go over with you, and we'll set matters to rights in a minute. Do you know who did it?"

"I think I do. I am almost sure——"

"Well, don't let him know that you know, whoever it is."

"Why not?"

"Because you may have more trouble if you do."

"But I don't want to sleep in a wet bed. I'll catch cold."

"Take your bedding off and let it dry."

"Maybe they'll pour more water on it if I do."

"I guess not."

"Hello; got a protector have you?" Dan looked up as he heard the question, and saw Gus Kiggins before him. "Well, you'll need his help, I guess," continued Gus, as he looked again at the troubled little lad. "He wants his mamma, doesn't he? Poor little darling! Do the naughty bad boys plague him? He mustn't play with muckers. It is naughty and it is not nice. Come——"



"That's enough!" broke in Dan quietly.

"Enough of what?" demanded Gus as he instantly turned to face Dan. His manner betrayed his anger and it was manifest that he resented the quiet words of the new boy.

"Enough of picking on a little fellow," said Dan steadily.

"What is it to you?"

"I sha'n't stand by and see Carlton abused."

"He needs a little attention—and so do you! And you'll both get it."

Dan did not move from his position nor did he reply to the words of his angry classmate. As he looked at Gus he saw that the boy undoubtedly was possessed of great physical strength. He was not any taller than he, but was much heavier. Dan recalled too, what one of the boys had said, that "Gus Kiggins was one of the best boxers in the Tait School." The fellow was angry now and not only inclined to quarrel, but apparently ready to seek trouble. Dan was also aware of the feeling of jealousy which doubtless had been aroused by what he had seen of his pitching in the scrub game of baseball. "Here comes Squint!" exclaimed Gus suddenly in a low voice, as the teacher who was in charge of the entry came into the hall. "That saves you this time, but if you don't learn how to mind your own business you'll get some teaching that isn't down in the catalogue!" With this parting threat Gus turned and left the hall. The teacher



nodded to the two boys who remained in the entry, and at once entered his room.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!" exclaimed Carlton to Dan.

"For what?"

"For taking my part against that big bully."

"Has he ever troubled you before?"

"Yes. He pulled my ears this morning, and when I cried he picked me up in his arms and held me over the balusters."

"What did you do then?"

"I cried—a little."

"What for?"

"Because I was scared. He might have dropped me," replied Carlton, unable to conceal his surprise as he looked at Dan.

"Did it make him stop when you cried?"

"No. He is a big bully! I guess he'll find out that I don't like him very well!"

Dan repressed the smile that rose to his lips and looked down at the little fellow before him. Plainly Carlton was a "spoiled" boy who never had been taught to consider anyone but himself. What a multitude of new elements the shrinking selfish little lad had to learn!

"Do you think Gus Kiggins will cry when he finds out that you don't like him very well, Carlton?" Dan inquired quizzically.

"He's just a big bully, that's all he is!" said Carlton. "I don't like the boys here anyway. I



guess I'll go home. My mother told me I might leave if I didn't want to stay."

"What will your father say?"

"I haven't any father. He's dead."

"Have you any brothers?"

"No."

Dan's knowledge of life was limited, but he thought he saw plainly the training which Carlton had received. Doubtless, he surmised, the boy's mother in her loneliness and grief had devoted herself to the only child she had. His every wish was granted, his will never was thwarted, and he ruled his mother as a tyrant might have done.

"Carlton," Dan said quietly, "what do the fellows call the boy that runs away or cries when he has something hard to do?"

"I don't know what they call him and I don't care. I won't stand it to have that big bully pull my ears or let the boys pour water in my bed! My mother——"

"Did you know my father is dead too?" broke in Dan.

"No. Is he?"

"Yes. I've got a lot of hard things to learn too. I am sure I shall feel just as you do many times, but I'm not going to run. The boys all think the fellow that runs away is a coward."

"But you're big and strong."

"In some ways."

"You aren't afraid of Gus Kiggins."



"No, but there are some other things that I'm afraid of."

"What are they?"

"A good many."

"Really?"

"Yes, I've thought already of doing just what you say you're going to do, but I've decided to stay and fight it out."

"I can't fight."

"Yes, you can!"

"I'd like to know how."

"If you'll try you'll soon learn."

"Will you show me how?" asked Carlton eagerly.

"I'll show you all I know, but that isn't much."

"Yes, it is! I know it is! I'm coming over to have you show me. I'd like to find out——"

"Come whenever you want to," said Dan as he smiled and at once departed from the hall. As he walked to his room he was thinking of what the little fellow had said. He wanted to run away from his troubles. "That's just like me," said Dan to himself. "I haven't learned to do what a lot of the fellows here have, and just because it's hard for me to learn I wanted to play the baby act too. Well, I guess Carlton and I are in the same boat. We'll have to learn how to paddle or just be carried down stream. That's all there is to it."

"Where have you been?" asked Walter as Dan entered the room.



"Oh, I went over to his room with that Carlton Hall. He's a little fellow and a new boy—green in some ways as I am," Dan added.

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's having his troubles. The boys upset his room, pour water in his bed—and——"

"That's enough, isn't it!" laughed Walter. "Oh well, it's a hard row to hoe, but it'll do him good. He'll learn pretty soon how to pitch into the fellows and drive them out. It's the only way. Dan, you did yourself proud to-day."

"Did I?"

"Yes, sir, you did! The fellows are wild about you. When you struck out Hodge and Smith and Gus Kiggins, our three heaviest hitters, twice in succession they all said you were surely the real thing."

"Did Gus Kiggins say so?"

"Not exactly," laughed Walter. "His nose is out of joint. You wouldn't exactly expect him to be happy over such a thing."

"No," assented Dan.

"He'll be all right though, he'll have to be. He isn't very popular with the fellows anyhow."

"He can play ball."

"Yes, he's a good player all right enough, but he's a dirty player. He was center on the football team last fall, but Samson wouldn't let him hold down the place."

"Why not?"



"Oh, Gus had a way when the ball was snapped back of grabbing dirt in each hand and then rubbing it into the eyes of the center of the other team. Then he had a trick of grabbing the other center right by the leg and pinching his muscles so hard that the fellow was limp as a rag. Of course it wasn't so bad when it came to his putting up a game like that with the Military Academy. They're a lot of muckers themselves and any trick is fair in war, you know."

"Gus Kiggins said I was a mucker."

"Yes, I know he did, but you mustn't mind a little thing like that. Gus is sore."

"Sore?"

"Why, yes," laughed Walter. "He'd counted upon being the pitcher of the school nine next spring. Naturally he doesn't enjoy having you take his place. You wouldn't like it yourself."

"I haven't taken his place yet."

"You're dead sure of it, Dan, if you can keep up such work as you were doing this afternoon. All the fellows say so. They're warm for forming the new league too. I think myself it's a sure thing. We'll have the pennant in baseball too, if you pitch your game. Dan, you'll be the king!"

Dan smiled at the suggestion, though the words of praise were sweet to him. To an extent they served to drive away some of the darker feelings that had been in his mind. He decided in his quiet way that he would keep his eyes open and perhaps



some of the things in which he was aware that his training was deficient might be improved without his roommate referring to them, for in spite of his unassuming ways Dan was keenly sensitive to the suggestions for improvement which Walter felt free to make.

That same evening after supper Smith, Hodge, and Ned all came to Dan's room, and their words of praise for the work of the afternoon were doubly soothing to Dan's troubled heart. After all, perhaps, he was not entirely out of place among the boys of the Tait School, he thought.

As the conversation turned to other matters and Ned's words kept his companions in good humor, Dan felt himself strongly drawn to the boy. Sturdy, thickly set, his round face plain in feature, but lighted up by his love of fun and his manifest friendliness for everyone, Dan decided that Ned was one of the boys to whom anyone might turn with confidence. Whatever Ned's defects might be, he was true.

"Look here, Ned," Smith was saying, "do you see that scar on my cheek?"

"I do," replied Ned. "What of it?"

"I got it in the cars the other day. I had to stand, and right in front of me was a woman who had a long hatpin in her hat. I tell you such things ought to be stopped by law. I'm opposed to them."

"Yes. You're against long hatpins, so to speak,"



laughed Ned. "Well, I've been against them myself several times."

"That's all right," said Hodge as the boys laughed. "You want to keep away from those things."

"My father told me just before I left home how to keep the doctor away," said Smith.

"How?"

"'An apple a day keeps the doctor away.' That's poetry. You fellows might not know it, so I'm repeating it for your benefit."

"I know something better than an apple to keep him away," said Ned.

"What's that?"

"An onion. That'll keep the doctor and everybody else away too."

"Ned, we'll have to shut you up if you don't quit that," said Hodge.

"That makes me think of something that happened at home just before I left for school," continued Ned, unabashed. "My father was looking for a new chauffeur. There was one chap that applied for the place that my father rather liked, though I didn't agree with him exactly. Finally my father asked the fellow how long he had been in his last position. 'Five years,' the fellow told him. 'That's a good record—a remarkably good record in these days,' my father said. You know he always says 'these days' as if he thought the world somehow was running down and was almost out, and the



worst of it is he always looks straight at me when he says it."

"I wonder why," suggested Hodge soberly.

"I wonder about it too," said Ned.

"Oh, go on with your chauffeur," said Smith. "We've got to hear about him, I suppose, so let's get through with it. I've got something I want to say, but no one ever has a chance when Ned is around. He even talks in his sleep. You wind him up and——"

"Keep still there, you one of a million varieties. I'm doing this. Where was I when you broke in with your drivel?" asked Ned.

"You were giving us a long-drawn-out tale of your new chauffeur," said Walter. "Probably all you wanted was to let us know that you had a car. What kind is it?"

"The kind that little Alexander and little Moses had in the bulrushes," suggested Hodge. "The kind that mother used to make."

"This applicant for the proud position of chauffeur in my ancestral domicile——"

"Be-a-u-ti-ful language," drawled Smith. "My, I wish I could talk that way."

"This applicant said, in response to my father's question," continued Ned unabashed, "that he had been five years in his last place. 'Fine record,' said my pater, much delighted. 'Why did you leave?' he then asked the chap."

"Ah, I know the answer to that," said Hodge.



“That came over in the Mayflower. That was told to J. Smith by Pocahontas.”

“What was the answer. I never heard it,” said Walter.

“Why, the fellow left his last place because he was pardoned out or his term had expired, I forget which,” groaned Hodge.



## CHAPTER XX

## A CHANGE IN WALTER

DAN had not taken any part in the bantering of the boys, but he none the less enjoyed their light and easy way of looking at life. It was all very different from his own early experiences. Since the death of his father life had been a hard struggle. Every penny had to be counted with care and the work on the farm was exacting. Early and late he had toiled, though he never had thought of complaining. Tom and his mother were laboring as hard as he. Indeed, most of his neighbors knew no more than he did of the lighter side of life.

As the new boy listened to the conversation, he had enjoyed it all, though it was difficult for him to understand how it was possible for his friends to throw aside apparently all feeling of responsibility. Someone must be working, and working hard too, to provide the means by which all the advantages which were given them were to be had. And yet no one seemed to be thinking of that nor of any responsibility that came with such privileges. Although Dan was happy in his quiet way, he was still at a loss to understand his friends. Their home training had been different from his, their lives



had been easy, plenty of money had been given them, even their very clothing had an air which Dan now realized made his own appear in a light of which he had never once thought. As far as Rodman was concerned, he had always felt that he appeared as well as any of the country boys—that is, if he ever thought of such things at all.

At the Tait School, however, all was changed, and though Dan did not quite understand as yet in just what the difference consisted, he still was conscious that in his life some of the elements that appealed strongly to him were lacking. Perhaps he was equally unaware that he himself was possessed of certain very desirable qualities that were lacking in the well-dressed, self-possessioned boys who made up the new world into which he had entered.

As the days passed, Dan found himself compelled to work hard in order to maintain a place in the classes to which he had been assigned. He had been out of school several years, and the work which he had tried to do alone and even that in which Moulton had directed him had left him poorly prepared. But there was in the country boy a spirit of determination that counted for much. Mr. Hale, one of the teachers, had apparently taken a special interest in the new boy. "Remember, Richards," he said to Dan one day, "ninety per cent of success means work. Indeed, that is about all there is of it anyway. Genius is said to be a capacity for work, and not much else.



The great man is the man who can do more than others. If you work you'll win. Of course it must be the right kind of work and it must be in the right way, for there is a deal of difference between mere activity and true work."

"I don't think I quite understand," Dan had said.

Mr. Hale laughed as he continued, "Did you see that house that was being moved down the street yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you notice that the men had a horse to wind the rope around the windlass and so pull the building?"

"Yes, sir; I saw that."

"Well, yesterday afternoon I stopped to watch them a few minutes. The poor old horse was freed from his task a minute, the rope was being adjusted, I fancy, or there were some boards to be moved or something to be done. But the poor old horse didn't know. Without a word being spoken to him he started in on his task again. Around and around he traveled, keeping it up until the men took pity on him and stopped him. He—I mean the horse, of course—didn't know the difference, although he wasn't accomplishing a thing. The rope was not adjusted and in spite of his steady trot around the windlass he wasn't moving the house an inch. He was 'active' enough, but he wasn't doing any real work. Do you see what I mean?"



"Yes, sir; I think I do," said Dan thoughtfully.

"Don't you know you do?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'll come out all right in the end. You come to school to get your brains in working order, but don't forget that you must use your brains in your work as well as learn how to work your brains."

"Yes, sir."

"Some of the boys here, even when they are studying with a teacher, think they are studying just because they are holding books in their hands. They're like poor old Dobbin, who kept up his weary round when there wasn't any rope to be wound by the windlass."

Dan's eagerness to learn now increased with the passing days. He was determined to profit by the friendly advice of Mr. Hale. His own eagerness to learn was an additional incentive, born as it was of a daily increasing consciousness of his own deficiencies. His work in the classroom as yet was not sufficiently high to permit him to do his studying in his own room, but in his heart he was glad that the rule was enforced, for he thought that he could gain more in this way than if he had been left to himself. Dan's mind did not work rapidly, but his steady and persistent efforts were already beginning to count and every passing week found him a little farther advanced. The work was hard and at times so discouraging to the new boy that he thought of



giving it all up and returning to the farm. However, he did not refer to his feeling in the presence of his friends and fought so hard against it that the temptation to give up became less with the rapidly passing days.

Most of his friends in his own form or class were also among those who were denied the privilege of studying in their rooms, Ned being the only one to have a standing sufficiently high to obtain the privilege. Hodge, Smith, Gus Kiggins, and Walter were loud in their complaints at being compelled to do their work under the eye of Mr. Hale. Indeed, Walter asserted repeatedly that he was denied the privilege because of a prejudice against him, instead of his being judged on the merits of his work.

As for Gus, Dan soon found that the boy was so deeply interested in the work of the football team that apparently he had ignored or forgotten his anger at the new boy. The league between the four schools had been successfully arranged and the football games of the fall were to be included. The four officers of the league were made up of representatives of the different schools, Ned being the vice-president, while the Military Academy obtained the presidency by virtue of its success in the contests of the preceding year.

Carlton Hall too had gathered courage to meet at least a part of his problems. Though it was difficult for him to learn to rely upon himself, he



had followed Dan's advice and had no longer railed at the boys who made his life one of discomfort and his room difficult to live in. Even the threats of Gus Kiggins had, in a measure, ceased, for the school bully, in his deep interest in the work of the football team, had little time left for his petty tormenting of the homesick and innocent little lad who had been placed in the school by his mother in the fond hope that there he would acquire what she could not conceal from herself he was not having under her weak and selfish indulgence.

Occasionally Dan had been out on the diamond with Samson, the gym instructor and trainer, but the work had been only occasional. The trainer was also the coach of the eleven and his duties did not leave much spare time. On the other hand, Dan's eagerness to work on his studies had caused him to make use of the occasional half-holidays in consulting with Mr. Hale or in studying in his own room. His success in striking out the three heavy hitters as he had on his first appearance on the diamond had established a certain reputation for him, which steadily grew. He was awkward in his manner and very quiet-spoken in his intercourse with his fellow students, although he was invariably pleasant in his dealings. As a consequence he had come to occupy a unique position in the life of the school.

Great things were expected of him, as he very well knew, and yet, at the same time, though he



was respected, he was not the intimate friend of any. Ned had been with him, perhaps, more than any other boy, and the two classmates were in the way of becoming fast friends. As for Walter, his enthusiasm had apparently reached its highest point at the beginning of the term and had been running down ever since. There were times when, to Dan, his presence in Walter's room seemed to be a source of irritation which the latter was at no pains to conceal. Dan, after his usual quiet manner, did not refer to what he saw nor to his own feelings. He was still the same quiet earnest boy that he was when he had first entered the Tait School.

He was troubled far more than he would acknowledge by the growing intimacy of Walter and Gus. The latter had been a frequent visitor in their rooms, where he either ignored Dan or made some slighting remark which was intended to hurt. But as Dan seldom retorted, the pleasure of the attempt was soon lost and of late it had been Walter who had made the visits, seeking out Gus's room several times daily. Twice Dan ventured to remonstrate with his roommate, but each time Walter was angry, and as Dan discovered that his protests apparently did more harm than good he soon ceased his endeavors, although he still was deeply troubled by the growing intimacy.

In this manner the fall days passed and the settled routine of the life in the Tait School became



less irksome to Dan. He was steadily improving in his work, a fact which was noted by Walter as well as by others.

"Dan, you're just making a grind of yourself," said Walter irritably one day when the two boys were by themselves in their room.

"Am I?" asked Dan good-naturedly.

"Yes, you are. There are some things for a fellow to learn in school besides Latin and math."

"Yes, I have noticed that," said Dan quietly.

"Then, why don't you pay some attention to them?" asked Walter sharply, his growing irritation becoming still more manifest. "I didn't want to room with a 'chump.'"

Dan's face flushed, as in a low voice he said, "What do you want me to do, Walter?"

"Oh, stir around and do something. You're never down to see the eleven at work. You didn't even come out to yell when we played the Atlas High School off its feet. You just mope around over your books the whole time. I don't believe you've been out enough to keep your arm in shape, now have you?"

"Not very often," admitted Dan.

"Why don't you do it? You know what the fellows expect. If you don't make the nine I'll be the laughing-stock of the whole school. Brace up, Dan! Gus Kiggins says——"

"What does he say?" inquired Dan as his roommate hesitated.



"Oh, nothing much," said Walter, laughing a little uneasily. "I guess that Gus thinks about what all the fellows do."

"What's that?"

"Look here, Dan. You've just got to get into the school life, and that's all there is about it. You're nothing but a grind."

"If I were paying my own way I might feel differently."

"Don't bother your head about that. I guess my father won't complain if I don't. What he wants is to——"

"To what?"

"Oh, he'll be satisfied if I am," declared Walter lightly. "Why don't you come out to-morrow and get a look at the team? We play the Military Academy next week, you know, and we want every fellow on deck. It's our hardest game. If you don't show any school spirit how do you think the fellows will feel when it's your turn? You'll want backing when you're pitching against the Military Academy nine."

"I'll come if you want me to," said Dan quietly. But——" Dan stopped abruptly as Gus Kiggins entered the room.



## CHAPTER XXI

## DAN'S TROUBLES

**H**OW'S your shadow?" asked Gus, as he seated himself in an easy-chair and looked at Dan.

"My shadow?" inquired Dan. "I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, that little white-livered milksop that tags you most of the time. For my part, I think he needs a nurse-maid."

"You mean that little fellow in the fourth form—Carlton Hall?"

"I guess that's his name," laughed Gus. "It rhymes with bawl. He ought never to have left his mother. He's a mamma's darling all right, though he seems to have taken you up in her place. What do you get for looking after his nursing-bottle?"

For several weeks, indeed ever since the time when Dan had interfered with the school bully in his tormenting little Carlton Hall, Gus to all appearances had ignored or forgotten the ill will which he had manifested for the new member of his own class. He had been indifferent rather than openly unfriendly, and Dan had been well content to be left alone. His dislike for his rough and brutal class-



mate had become stronger as he noticed his growing intimacy with Walter, who was quickly and easily influenced by his surroundings. Dan now understood a part of the reason why Mr. Borden had offered to send him to the Tait School though he grimly resolved never to betray his knowledge to anyone, least of all to Walter.

The present visit and sneering words of Gus were somewhat unexpected and Dan suspected that there was more behind them than he was able to see at the present time. His voice did not betray his anger at the contemptuous question of his visitor and without further conversation he quietly prepared to leave the room.

"Where you going, Dan?" said Walter.

"Don't hinder little Carlton's nurse," laughed Gus. "The poor child may need his bottle. He wants somebody to play with him. Don't you know that good little boys die young?"

"What's the matter with you, Gus?" demanded Walter, nevertheless laughing at the taunting words of his classmate.

"Nothing the matter with me!" declared Gus. "I'm fit. I was never in better form in my life. I wish the game with the Military Academy was tomorrow instead of a week from Saturday. I want a chance to line up against Hackett. Last year he served me a trick that I haven't forgotten. No one ever does that to me and lives to tell the tale." As he spoke, the bully looked brutally at Dan, as if



there was some vague and implied threat in his words.

"You're enough for any fellow in the school," laughed Walter.

"Am I? Well, you tell your rube roommate that if he can keep his little friend's mouth shut he'll be doing him a mighty friendly turn. It will be better for everybody concerned."

"What has he been doing now?"

"Setting Mr. Hale after me," said Gus angrily. "What do you think is the latest?"

"I haven't any idea," replied Walter. "What is it?"

"Hale told me that if any more trouble was made in pretty little Carlton's room one or two members of the team would be shut out from the games."

"Did he mean you?"

"I guess so. If he didn't, why did he speak to me in that way?"

"You know better than I do," laughed Walter, as Dan looked steadily at their visitor, though he did not speak.

"Don't let me keep you," continued Gus, looking again at Dan. "Why do you linger so long? If you want to go and play horse or Injun with your little pal, don't let me prevent you. My only suggestion is that you tell the nice little boy that if he 'blabs' on me again he will want to arrange for the coroner. And so will anyone who tries to set him up to such tricks."



Gus's face flushed an angry red as he spoke directly to Dan, while Walter was looking in wonder first at one boy and then at the other.

"The little fellow has a right to protect himself," said Dan quietly.

"'Protect himself'!" said Gus scornfully. "There isn't any place in the Tait School for a telltale."

"How much of a place is there for a coward who picks out some little chap who can't defend himself and spends his time picking on him?"

"Do you say I am a coward?" shouted Gus, drawing back his fist threateningly.

"You know better than I do," retorted Dan quietly. "I'm sorry if Carlton has been telling Mr. Hale about your dirty tricks. I don't believe he has, but even if he did, he wasn't going beyond his rights. His mother pays a lot of money to send him here and she has a right to expect that her boy shall get her money's worth. If any fellow tries to——"

"Do you say I am a coward?" Gus again broke in loudly.

"I haven't said so."

"Yes, you have! You feel mighty safe to talk that way here in the dormitory where the teachers can hear everything. Come on down to the field! I'll show you whether I'm a coward or not! I'll meet you any time you say!" Gus raised his voice and fairly shouted his defiance.



"You talk like a brave man," said Dan in a low voice.

"I'm no mucker anyway!"

"Aren't you? You might ask some of the boys what they think."

"Come on!"

"With you? You get out of this room!"

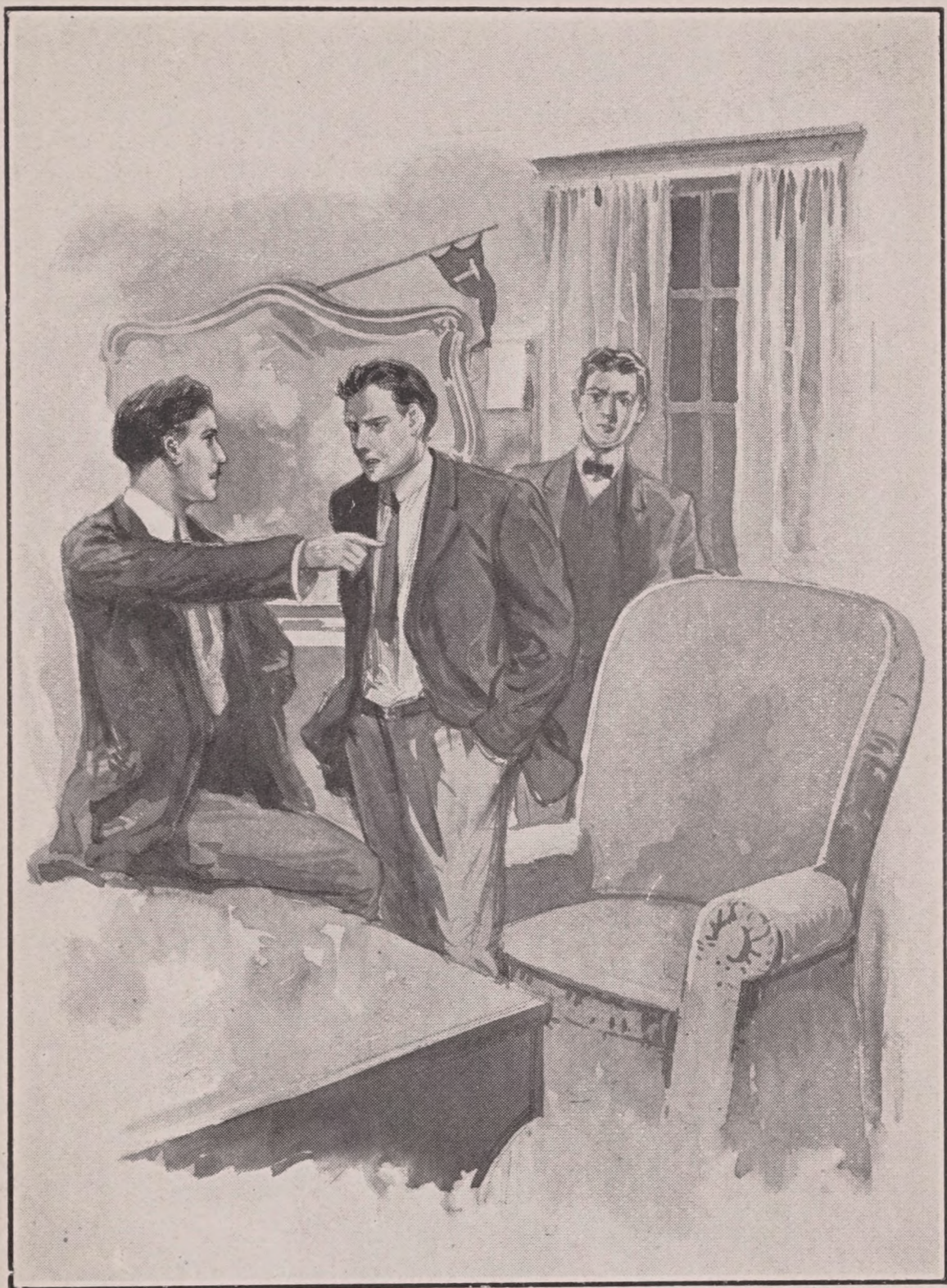
"Perhaps you'll put me out," sneered Gus. "Or no, perhaps you'll run and cry. Go tell Mr. Sharp, he's in charge of this hall. Tell him to come and help you. That's what you've been setting up your baby to do. I know you! You've set him up to tell tales of me, so that you could get me in trouble and you wouldn't have to do any work to get a place on the nine this spring——"

"Will you leave the room?" broke in Dan.

"When I get ready. Want me to go before?"

Dan waited to hear no more. He turned suddenly and seized the bully by the back and before Gus was able to realize the situation he was out of the room. But the school bully was a powerful boy, and was twisting and turning in his efforts to break the hold of Dan. As the two struggling boys came into the hall they found themselves face to face with Mr. Sharp. Instantly they released their grasp and, with an air of apparent indifference, Gus said, "All right, Richards, I'll see you again." The boy tried to speak indifferently, although his breathing was labored and his face betrayed his anger.





“ ‘ You get out of this room ! ’ ”







"What is the meaning of this, young gentlemen?" demanded Mr. Sharp, as he looked at the boys. The teacher was a mild-mannered, inoffensive man, whose dealings with the boys lacked many of the qualities that had made Mr. Hale respected as well as beloved by all the students in the school. "Don't you know that scuffling in the rooms and in the halls is forbidden?"

"Yes, sir," answered Dan.

"I am surprised at you, Richards," continued Mr. Sharp, his face betraying an increasing annoyance. "This is the first time I have known of your breaking the school rules."

"Yes, sir."

"What have you to say for yourself?"

"I'm afraid there isn't anything to be said, Mr. Sharp."

"What have you to say, Kiggins?" demanded the teacher irritably.

"We were only fooling," muttered Gus.

"That's the way it was, Mr. Sharp!" spoke up Walter. "They didn't mean to break the rules. It isn't study-hour——"

"That makes no difference," interrupted Mr. Sharp. "I shall give you each ten marks and place you both on the 'limits' for a week."

"But I'm on the eleven, Mr. Sharp," protested Gus. "That will keep me from practising with the team and we're to play the Military Academy next week." Twenty-five marks caused a boy to be



suspended, and to be given "the limits" was to prevent him from leaving the school grounds, even to go to the athletic field during the days for which the sentence was declared.

"You should have thought of that," said Mr. Sharp.

"But I must go. There isn't any other way. I'll appeal to the doctor."

"A repetition of such a threat will bring you ten marks more," said Mr. Sharp pettishly. "Go to your room and remain there until the bell rings for supper! I am deeply chagrined to find you, Richards, in such a scrape as this," the teacher again said as he turned to Dan. "I expected better things of you."

Dan did not reply and in a brief time he and Walter entered their room and closed the door.

"That's a smart trick you've played this time, Dan Richards," said Walter fiercely when the two boys were by themselves.

"I haven't played any trick."

"What did you order Gus to leave the room for?"

"I wanted him to get out."

"But you didn't have any business to tell him that. Remember, this is my room. When I want a fellow to leave I'll tell him to go. I sha'n't ask you."

"I don't remember that I asked you."

"You didn't. That's half the trouble."



"Well, Gus Kiggins went, didn't he?" asked Dan grimly.

"You caught him when he wasn't looking. You've got yourself in a mess now. A week's 'limits' and ten marks! You'll think that's a picnic, though compared with what Gus will do to you. He's the best boxer in the school."

"So I have heard."

"Look here, Dan; we might as well have this out now as any time. If you think you're going to order my friends out of my room any time you take a notion you're mistaken, that's all! I won't stand for it."

"Walter, you'd better draw a line through the room then; if you want to you can have such fellows as Gus Kiggins on your side. I simply don't want him on my side of the line."

"Who pays for this room?"

"Your father, as I have frequently heard you say."

"Well, he pays for the whole room, doesn't he?"

"Yes—half of it for you and half for me. If I had known what I had to put up with, you might have had a roommate like Gus Kiggins."

"He isn't the only fellow in school that has ten marks and the 'limits' for a week."

"That's right," assented Dan quietly.

"I guess my father will think it's a toss up."

"He'll soon know."

"How? Are you going to tell my father about



him?" asked Walter, his alarm betraying itself in his manner.

"I sha'n't mention the name of Gus Kiggins. I shall write your father about my part."

"But you might as well tell him about Gus. He'll know just as soon as he hears from you."

"Very well. Will you write him then?"

"I? Why should I write him?"

"I thought you thought it was better for you to write than for me."

"Will you write if I don't?"

"I shall."

"I'd like to know why?"

"Because I want him to have the facts—that's all."

"Then I'll write him," said Walter hastily.

"All right."

"And look here, Dan. I didn't just mean what I said. I don't want to be a cad. I didn't—I wish I hadn't said what I did."

"About what?"

"You know," said Walter foolishly. "I mean about the room."

"I understand," said Dan in a low voice.

"I was just a little worried, Dan. Gus Kiggins has his faults, but then he isn't the worst fellow in school. But I don't want you to have any trouble——"

"Why not?"

"He's the best fighter in school."



“You mean best or worst?”

“Either,” replied Walter, with an uneasy laugh.

“I don’t want you to queer yourself.”

“I don’t want to myself,” said Dan good-naturedly.



## CHAPTER XXII

## CHANGED RELATIONS

THE relations between Dan and Walter were daily becoming more strained. Gus Kiggins was a less frequent visitor than he had been formerly, but Dan was convinced that this simply meant that Walter was spending more time in the room or company of the boy for whom Dan had formed an intense dislike. The threatened trouble between himself and Gus apparently had vanished and even little Carlton Hall was not troubled as he formerly had been. The lad was a bright little fellow and in the classroom was already making a reputation for his quickness. Now that his first feeling of homesickness was gone and there had come a comparative freedom from his tormentors, Carlton was entering more fully into the spirit of the life of the school.

For Dan the little fellow's admiration, as well as his devotion, steadily increased. More and more Carlton sought Dan's room and company. If Walter objected, he did not say so, though his unconcealed contempt was not lacking. But Dan and Walter, though they occupied the same rooms, were no longer such warm friends as once they had been.



There were not many times when the boys quarreled. It was rather an absence of all friendly relations that marked their daily lives.

As the weeks passed Dan's steady work began to tell. After the Christmas vacation he was among the few boys of his class who were permitted to study in their rooms instead of in the study-room, where the other boys assembled every afternoon and evening and did their work under the direction of a teacher, who for Dan's class was Mr. Sharp. At first Dan had almost decided to keep on with his work in the study-room, because of his feeling that he could do better work there, but his lack of respect for this particular teacher finally led him to accept the privilege and his study-hours were therefore spent in the quiet of his own room.

A strong friendship had sprung up between Hodge, Ned, Smith, and Dan. At the Christmas holidays the three boys had been visitors in Dan's home in Rodman. The country life in winter had been so new and novel to the visitors that the three boys had highly enjoyed their vacation-time. The fact that Dan's home was a humble one apparently only served to increase the feeling of friendliness which they had for Dan, while for his quiet little mother everyone had an admiration that was as strong as the respect and affection for her boy. Dan had urged Walter to come to Rodman with his friends, but the latter had curtly declined and Dan had not repeated the invitation.



On the train which the four boys took when the day of departure from Rodman arrived, Dan and Ned were seated together. The enthusiasm of Dan's friends over their visit was keen and in course of their conversation Ned said to Dan: "It's simply great! I never coasted right over the tops of fences before. The crust was hard enough to hold up a horse."

"The coasting is all right," replied Dan lightly. "It is the snow-shovel that is the instrument of torture. When you have shoveled through two or three of those eight-foot drifts you lose a little of your enthusiasm for snow that sometimes comes in November and stays right with us till April. Last year we had a hundred and forty-three days of sleighing."

"Great!" exclaimed Ned. "That is what puts the breath of life into you. I can understand now where you get some of the nerve you've shown."

"'Nerve'! I don't know that I have any nerve."

"Well, you have, whether you know it or not."

"I guess it's because you're my friend that you say that."

"Not a bit. It takes nerve to do what you're doing."

"I don't see how."

"Look here, Dan, I know it's none of my business, but I've sometimes been afraid you'd leave school."

"Why should I?" asked Dan, though his face



betrayed something of his feeling, which was not altogether surprise.

"Why, we all know—it's none of my business," said Ned lamely. "I don't suppose I ought to speak of such things."

"Go ahead," said Dan quietly.

"Well, you know," said Ned hesitatingly, "all the fellows understand how it is that you are in the Tait School."

"That Mr. Borden pays my way?"

"Yes."

"I didn't ask him."

"Of course you didn't. Everybody knows that, and what we've been afraid of, now that Walter has shown himself to be such a chump, was that you—that if he didn't quit—that some day you'd——"

"I'd what?" inquired Dan, aware of his friend's confusion.

"Oh, that you'd quit and call the whole thing off," said Ned.

"Would you?"

"I don't know," replied Ned in a low voice.

"I have thought of it," said Dan quietly.

"We all know that. But don't you do it."

"Why not?"

"We'll need you in the pitcher's box, for one thing."

"That's what Walter thought when he got his father to take me up. You know Walter was behind the whole thing."



"It isn't his fault or Gus Kiggins' either if we don't know it," said Ned angrily.

"What does Gus say?"

"You know what he says."

"That I'm a charity patient."

"Nobody pays any attention to what he says, anyway," said Ned.

"I'm not so sure of that. Honestly, Ned, what would you do if you were in my place?" asked Dan quietly.

"I don't know, though I know what I want you to do."

"Stay on?"

"Yes."

"And put up with what Gus Kiggins says and does?"

"He doesn't count for much."

"Then, with what Walter says?"

"That's harder, I'll own up; but——"

"But what?"

"What does Mr. Borden say?"

"Nothing. He hasn't said a word."

"Have you said anything to him?"

"Not yet."

"Then don't."

"Look here, Ned," said Dan, turning about in the seat and facing his companion, "I'll tell you that sometimes the whole affair is more than I can stand. I didn't ask to come. I had a little money saved and I was going to the normal school. I



wish now I had and hadn't taken a cent from Mr. Borden. But he came to me and told me it was all pure sentiment on my part that made me draw back. He went on to say that he hadn't any foolish notions about such things, that in his business he depended a good deal upon the things his friends could throw his way, and that he never refused any of them because of any such feelings as I pretended to have. Then he told me that I could look upon it as a pure matter of business. That Walter was a spoiled boy and that it would be worth a good deal more to him—I mean Mr. Borden—to pay what my term bills would cost just to have me room with Walter. Of course, I wanted to come, and when he put it in that light I couldn't find any reason why I shouldn't take up with his offer."

"There wasn't any reason!" exclaimed Ned warmly.

"Perhaps not—and yet as a business proposition, look at it for a minute. It isn't very modest of me to say so, but Mr. Borden thought—or at least he implied—that what influence I had over Walter would pay what it might cost his father to have me room with him. But look at it! You all say that Walter is a 'chump.' He's away down in his classes and if I should suggest to him to do certain things that would be the surest way of getting him to do just the opposite. Walter doesn't like me. He chums with Gus Kiggins——"

"He doesn't stick to anything very long, and there



isn't any reason for believing that Gus will be an exception."

"I am not sure of that. Gus seems to have him under his thumb."

"Get him out from under it."

"How?"

"Can't some of us help?"

"How?" again inquired Dan with a smile.

"Oh, we can have a talk with Walter, or we can put it up to Gus."

"No," said Dan. "Perhaps a word with Walter sometime, if it came in all right might be a good thing, but I don't want you to say anything to Gus."

"Why not?"

"It would make a bad matter worse. You see, this is a part of my course, I guess. I've had to learn a lot of things——"

"You're learning them all right," broke in Ned. "You're in the first division now, and can study in your room——"

"I don't mean that."

"What do you mean then?"

"Oh, some other things. I've had a lot to learn. I've lived on a farm all my life, and there, you know, they don't always do things just as you fellows do who have been brought up in the city."

"What of it?"

"A whole lot of it. You don't understand because you've always had them. But I've had to keep my eyes open, and even then I find I'm doing



something that makes my cheeks burn. The first night I was in the school Walter had to tell me to put my butter on my butter-plate, not on——”

“The chump!” broke in Ned.

“No; he meant it all right. I guess I deserved it and a good deal more. Perhaps if I learn these little things now I sha’n’t have to learn them later when it would be a good deal harder for me.”

“You make too much of such things.”

“Do I?”

“Yes, you do. Nobody thinks of them except you.”

“They don’t have to.”

“You’re all right now, anyway, Dan.”

Dan smiled and did not reply, though the words of his friend were far more comforting than Ned could understand.

“There’s one way out of it,” continued Ned.

“What is that?”

“You give Gus all that is coming to him. You can do it! You——”

“What do you mean?”

“Thrash him.”

Dan threw back his head and laughed. “What good would that do?” he inquired. “Perhaps I couldn’t do it. He’s about the best boxer in school.”

“I’d risk it.”

“That’s good of you,” said Dan dryly. “My grandfather told me once that when he was a little fellow his older brothers tried to get him to rob



a bumblebee's nest they'd found in the hay-field. When he said he was afraid the bees would sting him, the boys told him to go ahead, 'They'd risk it.'

Ned laughed as he said, "And you think I'd be willing to take the risk if you took on Gus?"

"I didn't say that."

"No, you didn't; but you implied it. I'm not afraid of Gus Kiggins."

"I wasn't thinking about him."

"What are you afraid of then?"

"Myself. Suppose I should fight him, and then suppose I did succeed in whipping him—and that's something I'm not a bit sure of—what would I prove?"

"You'd put him where he belongs, anyway."

"I told you I wasn't thinking about him. I was thinking of myself."

"A fellow isn't called upon to stand everything."

"That's right."

"And yet you say you won't even defend yourself."

"Did I say that?"

"That's what you meant."

"Hardly," said Dan with a smile.

"Well, whatever you decide to do, promise me you won't do anything before you tell me."

"I promise you as far as Walter and Mr. Borden are concerned."

"All right. That's all I want. Hello, here we



are at the Junction. Some of the fellows ought to get on here. There are some of them," Ned added as he arose in his seat and peered from the window of the car. "Here comes Gus Kiggins himself!" he added hastily.

Several boys noisily entered the car, Gus leading the crowd. As he caught sight of the four boys he hastened down the aisle and, stopping in front of Dan, looked insolently at him and then in his loudest tones began to shout, "Co' boss! Co' boss! Co' boss!"



## CHAPTER XXIII

## AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

ABOVE the noisy greetings of the boys the sneering words of Gus Kiggins were plainly heard. Instinctively the boys turned and looked at Dan, but if he was aware of the taunt he did not manifest his feelings, except that his face flushed slightly.

"How did you find the hog business, Gus?" inquired Ned angrily, as he faced the boisterous bully.

"You've said enough about that," retorted Gus hotly.

"Have I?" laughed Ned, quick to see the impression he had made. "If I have I am glad of it. It's about the only way one can drive an idea into some heads, you know." Ned spoke quietly, but his anger was evident to all the boys.

"At any rate I don't carry the marks of my trade around with me!" declared Gus. "I don't wear pigskin boots——"

"You don't have to wear them," broke in Ned glibly.

"What are you fellows laughing at?" demanded Gus fiercely, as he turned to face the boys, who had broken into a shout at Ned's words.



"I don't see anything funny in what Ned said."

"That's the funniest part of the whole thing, Gus," said Hodge.

"Well, I guess if I wanted to I could rake up some things about everyone of you that wouldn't sound very pretty."

"Go ahead," called Smith.

"Is that the reason why you called out as you did when you came into the car?" asked Ned.

"He looked the part. That's why I said what I did."

"Every man does that more or less. My father says he can tell a preacher before the man says a word. So he can pick out a lawyer or a business man before a word is spoken. I suppose a fellow that comes from the country does carry around with him a few of the marks of his trade the same as everyone does, but if I lived where Dan does I wouldn't think of apologizing. I'd be proud of it. Gus, does a man that makes his living sticking hogs come to look like his trade the same as a preacher or a lawyer or a business man?"

A shout of laughter caused Ned to look about him in pretended astonishment. Gus Kiggins settled back in his seat, his face glowering with anger. But he soon became silent, as he well knew that he was no match for Ned in such a contest.

"Queer about Gus," said Ned to Dan after the journey was resumed. "Last year he wasn't so bad."



"What has changed him?" inquired Dan.

"I give it up. He seems to be almost insanely jealous of you."

"Of me?" Dan laughed a little bitterly as he spoke. "I know, of course, that he hates me, but I hadn't thought of his being jealous. What have I got to make him feel that way?"

"An arm," laughed Ned.

"You mean my pitching arm?"

"Of course. You know, he had it all fixed, as he thought, to be the pitcher on the nine this spring."

"He may be yet," said Dan quietly.

"Not much!" exclaimed Ned warmly. "We've got a fellow to occupy the box this spring who could give points to the best pitcher in the country."

"That's what Si—he's the harness-maker at Rodman, you know—is all the time saying," laughed Dan, his good nature now having been restored. "He wants to have the New Yorks come up to play the nine at Rodman. He seems to think they'd be surprised."

"Well, it's not quite so bad as that," said Ned lightly. "But I know we've a mighty good pitcher for the Tait School nine this spring. And don't you forget it, either! Don't you go into any fool business. Just grit your teeth and hang on. Everything will come out all right this spring. Gus Kiggins' jealousy is not very comfortable, but it never killed anyone yet. He hasn't got friends enough in the school to elect him dishwasher."



"Probably he doesn't want that job," said Dan smilingly. "And yet there isn't a finer-looking fellow in school. Just look at his shoulders now."

Ned glanced at Gus, who was seated in the end of the car. "Yes, he's got the shoulders and the muscle. He's all right until you get up to his head. Last year he was a fairly decent fellow in spite of his dirty work on the football team. This year he cut out his low-down tricks, but he seems to be letting it out in other ways."

"The eleven did fairly well," suggested Dan.

"Tied the Atlas High School for third place," laughed Ned. "We'll say that the St. John's School really was lowest. They can't deny it, either. But when the baseball season opens, then just keep an eye on the Tait School nine! The first game will be an eye-opener! No one knows what a 'find' we have in the pitcher's box."

"Don't you think the school league is a good thing?"

"Fine! We weren't in shape for football, that's all. We'll make it up though when it comes to baseball! Next year we'll be all ready for hockey and basket-ball. I think that we'll be able to arrange for a track meet this spring too. Ever do anything on the track, Dan?"

"I never did."

"You never tried, you mean," laughed Ned.

"I never tried, then. I guess I can 'run' though," said Dan dryly.



"I guess you can too, though not in the way you mean. I don't believe you know how to run away. Don't you ever learn, either. But when it comes to running for something, that's another story. I tell you, Dan, there's nothing like it! When a half-dozen fellows are all bunched on the track and everyone is putting out every ounce of strength he's got and the tape isn't more than ten yards away and the fellows are all yelling like mad and you can feel that the sprinter from the High School or the Military Academy is right on your heels, even when you don't, for the life of you, dare to look behind you—why, I'm telling you, Dan Richards, there are mighty few things in life to be compared with it! I think I'm a fairly good sprinter. I can do the hundred in ten-three. But I believe you can do better than that. You're just built for a runner."

"Didn't I tell you I could 'run'?" asked Dan dryly.

"That's all right," replied Ned lightly. "I know what you mean."

"Well, I'm glad you do," said Dan soberly. "I'm not at all sure that I do."

"You just keep on sawing wood, that's all you have to do."

"Or calling 'co, boss,'" said Dan a little bitterly as he saw Gus Kiggins rise from his seat.

"Don't think of it. That pork chop isn't worth wasting your time on! Just leave him alone."

"I'd like to, if he will leave me alone."



"He will," said Ned positively. "We'll attend to him."

Whether or not it was due to the "attentions" of Ned and his friends, Dan was as pleased as he was surprised, as the days of the winter term passed, to find that Gus Kiggins seemed to avoid him. He seldom came to the room of Dan and Walter; and as for Walter, although he still was much in Gus's company, he did not often have much to say to his roommate. Much as Dan would have liked to enter into Walter's life more fully, he was too proud to betray his chagrin at the change which had now apparently become fixed in their relations. The old friendly feeling was gone and in its place had come a relation which simply made Walter apparently tolerate the presence in his rooms of the boy for whose coming he had been chiefly responsible.

The monotony of the routine of the winter term was broken in March by a visit from Mr. Borden. Dan, who had not been informed by Walter of the expected visit, was surprised one afternoon when he entered his room to find Mr. Borden seated there. His first thought was that Walter had sent for his father and a feeling of anger arose in Dan's heart. Why had he himself not written before his roommate could complain? Perhaps Mr. Borden had come for the purpose of explaining that his promise was now void.

The greeting which Walter's father gave him was



so quietly cordial that Dan was perplexed. He was not able entirely to conceal his embarrassment even when Mr. Borden bade him to be seated. "When did you come, Mr. Borden?" Dan inquired.

"I arrived this morning," replied the visitor quietly.

"Have you seen Walter?"

"Not yet." Mr. Borden smiled as he saw Dan's expression of surprise. "I had a few things to attend to first before I could give any time to Walter or you."

"I'll go out and find him for you," said Dan, hastily rising as he spoke.

"Not quite yet, Dan. There are some things I want to say to you when Walter is not here."

"Yes, sir." Dan's face flushed and his confusion was manifest.

"Do you know where Walter is now?"

"No, sir."

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Probably he is with some of the boys. I'll be glad to look him up if you would like to have me."

"Not yet," said Mr. Borden quietly. "If you were to look him up for me, where would you go first to find him?"

"Why, in some one of the fellows' rooms," replied Dan, looking quickly at his visitor as he spoke. How much and what did Mr. Borden know?

"Would you go first to Gus Kiggins' room?"

"Why, I might," replied Dan lamely.



"I thought so. Dan, have you had any 'marks' against you?"

"Yes, sir. I've had ten."

"Been put on the 'limits'?"

"Yes, sir," answered Dan, his face flushing scarlet.

"Do you mind telling me what for? Please do not think I am too inquisitive, but I should like to know the reasons."

"Mr. Sharp said I was scuffling in the hall. That is against the rules, you know."

"Yes, I know. If there is a rule against scuffling why did you break it?"

"I didn't intend to break it, but I suppose I did," said Dan lamely.

"Why?" persisted Mr. Borden.

"I haven't any answer."

"Would you put Gus Kiggins out of your room if the same thing happened again?"

Dan glanced quickly at Mr. Borden, but the face of his visitor did not betray any feeling. "I don't know," he said at last in a low voice.

"In which division of the class are you, Dan?" Mr. Borden next inquired.

"The first."

"That's the first quarter of the class, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is Walter in that division?"

"I don't think he is—that is, he isn't this term—I mean——"



"Will he be there next term?"

"I don't know."

"Do you expect him to be?"

"He could be—he might. He has a quicker mind than I have."

Still Mr. Borden's face did not betray his real feelings. "Dan," he said abruptly, "why didn't you write me?"

"About what, Mr. Borden?"

"Why didn't you write me that letter you began?"

"How do you know I began a letter?" asked Dan in amazement.

"You began a letter to me in which you thanked me for what I had done for you, but you went on to say that you could not stay in the Tait School any longer."

"How do you know?" asked the astounded Dan with crimson face.

"Never mind, Dan, how I know. Let me answer your unwritten letter by word of mouth. A bargain is a bargain and you have no right to go back upon it any more than I have."

"But, Mr. Borden," protested Dan, "that wasn't it. I didn't feel that—I thought I couldn't keep on—I didn't want you to think——"

"Listen to me," said Mr. Borden as Dan's confusion became still more manifest. "I understand how you feel. You thought you were accepting favors. You thought I believed that if you roomed



with Walter he would do better work. He hasn't done better work and you thought you were not living up to your part. I sincerely trust that Walter has not been such a 'cad' as to make you feel in any way that you were under obligations to him or me."

As Dan was silent, Mr. Borden went on. "Let me say right here, Dan, that I am more than satisfied with my part. I know Walter and I think I know you. If at any time you want to leave him and room with some other boy, I shall not object. I don't believe there is a better investment than putting money into men. If I could only buy for Walter what he needs I should not stop at the expense. And, Dan, there's another point."

"Yes, sir."

"Sometimes I think it is a better, a truer test of a real man to receive than it is to give. It's harder sometimes too. But I'm talking with you about our bargain. I want you to stick to it. You will, I know. Ah, here comes Walter," Mr. Borden added hastily as his boy entered the room.

Dan at once departed and for an hour sat in the library holding a book but not reading a word. An hour later he returned to his room. As he entered he saw that Walter was alone, but his roommate sprang to his feet and his face was livid with anger as he faced Dan.



## CHAPTER XXIV

## THE OPENING OF THE LEAGUE GAMES

**Y**OU liar! You mucker! You low-down tell-tale!" shouted Walter, looking straight into the face of his roommate. "I might have known you'd spy on me. That's what all the fellows said you'd do! And now you've done it!"

Dan rose as Walter's tirade continued. For a moment he looked steadily at the angry boy and, though his face was colorless, without a word he started toward the door.

"Hold on!" shouted Walter, springing in front of Dan and closing the door. "You don't crawl out that way! I'd like to know what you have to say for yourself. We'll have this out right now while we're at it. I'd like to know what you have to say for yourself!"

"About what?"

"About what I've just said."

"You'll have to explain yourself."

"'Explain'; 'Explain'!" retorted Walter. "I 'explain'! You're the one, I guess, to do the explaining. Gus Kiggins says you can make a pet of a toad, but a toad will still be a toad to the end of the chapter, and I guess he's about right."



"How about a hog, Walter?" The sneering query escaped Dan's lips before he was fairly aware of what he had said. Deeply as he regretted his momentary failure to control his tongue he was aware that his provocation was great and that he had been most unjustly accused.

"Who are you to talk about hogs?" demanded Walter.

"I know a little about them. We raised a few on the farm. They are interesting animals, Walter, if you go at them in the right way."

"That hasn't anything to do with this matter. What I want to know is why you told my father."

"Told him what?"

"About me."

"What did I tell him about you?"

"That's just what I want to know."

"Did he say that I told him anything?"

"Of course he didn't."

"Then what are you talking about?"

"He knew a lot of things that he couldn't have found out unless you told him."

"Who said so? Did Gus Kiggins?"

"I guess I know that without any of the fellows having to tell me."

"What did your father know?"

"He knew a lot of things. He told me that if I didn't do better he would be compelled to take me out of school. He said he'd put me to work in the shops!" The expression of disgust that appeared



on Walter's face as he referred to the "shops" in his father's factory might have made Dan laugh at another time, but he felt no such inclination now. The matter was too serious.

"Look here, Walter!" said Dan. "Do you mean to tell me that you honestly believe I reported you to your father?"

"That's the only way he could have found out some things."

"Let me ask you a question. Do you know when your father came here?"

"Why, this afternoon, I suppose," replied Walter in surprise.

"No, sir. He came on the eight-thirty train this morning."

"He did? Where was he all the forenoon?"

"I don't know. He didn't tell me. Couldn't you guess?"

"I hadn't thought of that," said Walter slowly. "When did you first see him?"

"When I came into our room after the Latin hour."

"That was only a few minutes before I came," replied Walter, feeling relieved.

"Yes. As far as I recall, Walter, he asked me only one question."

"What was that?"

"He asked my opinion about Gus Kiggins."

"What did you say?" inquired Walter, looking anxiously into his roommate's face.



"Nothing that amounted to anything. I didn't have to, even if I had wanted to, for he knew pretty much all about him. I would have just as good a right, Walter, to say that you told him about me as you have to say that I told, for he asked me about those ten marks Mr. Sharp gave me and he knew too, that I'd been on the 'limits.' Did you tell him, Walter?"

"Of course I didn't. You know that as well as I do." Walter's voice was different now and there were traces of a smile about the corners of his mouth."

"I'm sure you didn't," said Dan warmly.

"The 'old boy' is nobody's fool——"

"The who?" interrupted Dan sharply.

"Oh, my father, if that's what you want me to say."

"Look here, Walter, I haven't any father. When I see some of you fellows with yours, do you know there's nothing in all the world that I want deep down in my heart as I do what you've got and I haven't. But if I did have one, and he was a man as true and interested as your father is and did as much for me as your father does for you, it doesn't seem to me that I'd speak disrespectfully of him or let any other fellow do it, either."

"Oh, he's all right," said Walter flippantly. "He means to do the right thing. I understand that as well as you do. The greatest trouble is that he doesn't just understand a fellow——"



"Maybe a part of the trouble, Walter, is because he does understand. Ever thought of that?"

"No, that isn't the way of it. My mother does." Dan smiled as he recalled the weak and somewhat vain little woman who thought she was manifesting a greater love for her boy because she upheld and defended him right or wrong. "Of course I know," resumed Walter, "that my father is a mighty smart man. It takes a cool hand to get ahead of him. He's the best business man in his line. Why, Dan, he's built up the business his father left him till now he has just four times as many men in the shops as he had when he began. When you say that he had been here all the morning, why, that puts things in a different light. He probably 'got busy.' Understand, Dan, that I didn't really mean to accuse you of going to him with stories about me, though you'll have to own up that it did look a bit suspicious when I found him alone with you and that he knew all about me."



CHAPTER XXV

A PLOT

**D**ID you suspect me before Gus Kiggins told you to?"

"Now, look here, Dan Richards, you're making a fool of yourself! Don't you suppose I ever have an idea of my own?"

"I do."

"You don't act as if you did. Look here, Dan, what's the trouble between you and Gus, anyway? Are you jealous of him?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Dan with a smile.

"He thinks you are."

"You can put his mind at ease on that score."

"Then what is it? Are you afraid of him?"

"Now you've found it."

"You are? He thinks you are, but I never would have believed it of you."

"I am."

"He is a powerful brute."

"I agree with you."

"And he's the best boxer in the school."

"That's what I've heard," said Dan quietly.

"Well, I don't know that I blame you," laughed



Walter. "He isn't exactly the kind of a chap I'd like to run up against on a dark street when I was all alone."

"I'm more afraid of him in the daytime when he's with others."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Walter sharply.

"You know what I mean."

"No, I don't."

"Look here, Walter," said Dan earnestly. "I don't mean to preach to you. I know I'm only a countryman and you've had lots of chances that I haven't. But if I had as clear and quick a mind as you have and then had such chances to develop it as you have here in this school, do you know what I'd do?"

"Yes. You'd buckle down to work."

"I certainly should."

"You don't know everything, Dan," said Walter, his pleasure at his roommate's words arousing his good nature, as unstinted praise never failed to do. "I hate the stuff we're getting here. Latin and algebra and physics! Bah! They make me sick. What good are they anyway? We'll never use them again after we get out of this old trap."

"Walter, did you ever see a fireman shoveling coal under the boiler of a locomotive?"

"Occasionally," laughed Walter.

"What do you suppose he does it for?"

"Oh, for about sixty or seventy dollars a month."



“Well, even if that is so, why does the company pay him that to do that work?”

“To heat up the boiler and get up steam.”

“Precisely. He doesn’t shovel that coal to get more coal or because he expects to use that coal again, does he?”

“What are you driving at anyway?”

“I may be all wrong, but my idea is something like this—just as a fireman shovels the coal, not to get more coal but to get steam, so I think the work here is not to get things we’ll use again, but to get or do things that will give us——”

“Steam?” broke in Walter with a laugh.

“Yes, sir! That’s it exactly. I’ve a funny idea that when a fellow shirks or dodges his work he’s really the fellow to suffer. He doesn’t cheat the teacher half so much as he cheats himself. He’s just subtracting that much power from himself, that’s all.”

“Dan, you’re a funny chap.”

“I know it, but I don’t believe I’m half so ‘funny’ as the fellow is who throws away such chances as he has here in the Tait School.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised if you were right. I wish I were like you, Dan. It’s easy for some fellows. But then you’ve got everything to get and I’ve got everything without any getting. My pater has more money than he knows what to do with; he’s got a big business and I’ll have a share in that by and by——”



"If you're strong enough and able to hold it," broke in Dan.

"I'm not afraid of that. I'll give you a job some day, maybe, but I know it would please the old folks at home if I should take hold; I'm half inclined to try it."

Perhaps the fact that Walter was only "half" inclined was the explanation of the fact that his good resolution lasted only a few weeks. For a time he did try, but his will was weak and he was so far behind in his studies that the work was doubly hard. In the end he relapsed into his old ways and spent more and more time with Gus Kiggins, while the renewed good-fellowship between the two roommates, which to Dan's delight had been in evidence, was soon broken. Walter became more irritable and his feeling for Dan apparently was one of increasing dislike.

But the days of the winter term passed rapidly and when spring arrived the prospects of the nine and the position it would secure in the new league became the absorbing matter of interest. Dan did his utmost to avoid meeting Gus Kiggins and was rejoiced as the days passed to find that apparently the effort was mutual. The two boys seldom met except on the diamond and there was no dispute as to Dan's right to occupy the pitcher's box. The players, the coach, and indeed the entire school, all were agreed, and great things were expected from Dan's work.



Meanwhile Gus Kiggins doggedly continued to practise pitching and his work was of such a character that he was looked upon as the substitute pitcher in addition to his work on first base, where he was acknowledged to be supreme.

Little Carlton Hall had learned a few lessons not taught in the classroom and somehow had weathered the storms, although he still was not without his attentions from Gus Kiggins and others. His deep affection for Dan had increased steadily, and it was Dan who had strengthened the younger boy's spirit of self-reliance and determination so that at last he had decided to remain in school, though his life there was not one of unalloyed pleasure.

The first game of the league was now at hand. The nine of the Military Academy and their supporters were to come the following day, and excitement ran high in the Tait School. Dan, in spite of his quiet manner, was perhaps more excited than any of his fellows, realizing as he did how much success or failure would mean to him.

The afternoon before the game Ned was surprised when Carlton Hall came to his room. "What's wrong, young man?" Ned demanded as he became aware of the excitement of his visitor.

At the boy's reply Ned was as much aroused as his caller, and seizing Carlton by the shoulders he demanded: "How do you know? Say that again! Be careful now!"



"It's just as I told you," said Carlton.

"Say it again," demanded Ned sharply.

"I was feeling lonesome," began Carlton obediently, "and I wanted to be alone. I went over to those bushes back of the library and just stretched myself on the ground there behind them. While I was lying there Gus Kiggins and Walter Borden came along and sat down on that bench the other side of the lilac bushes."

"How did you know who it was?"

"I peeked. I was just going to try to crawl away without being seen when I heard Gus say, 'We'll fix the pious fraud.'"

"Go on. What did Walter say?"

"He said, 'I hate to do it, Gus.'"

"Did Gus say what he wanted Walter to do?"

"You're right he did."

"What was it?"

"He wanted Walter to put some stuff in the water Dan drank or in something he ate before the game to-morrow."

"What did he want him to put in it?"

"Ipecac. Gus said, 'That'll make him sick enough to quit the box and it won't hurt him a bit, either.'"

"What did Walter say then?"

"He said he didn't want to do it. He said he didn't like Dan any better than Gus did, but he didn't want to go into any such low-down trick as that."





“ ‘I was just going to crawl away’ ”

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"I should think he wouldn't want to," said Ned savagely. "But he agreed in the end that he'd do it?"

"Yes. I think Gus knew something that Walter was afraid he'd tell if he didn't agree."

"The sneak! Did you hear either of them say when the trick was to be played?"

"Some time just before the game."

"How long did you lie there?"

"All the time they were talking. I wanted to get away, but I didn't dare move. If Gus Kiggins had found me he would have killed me," said Carlton, shuddering as he spoke.

"What did you do then?"

"I waited till they went away and then I put for your room as fast as my legs could carry me."

"Did you hear anything more?"

"That was all they talked about. Gus said if Walter would get Dan out of the pitcher's box, then he would see to it that he—I mean Walter—was elected captain of the nine for next year."

"They're a noble pair!" exclaimed Ned in disgust. "You're sure you haven't lisped a word of this to anyone?"

"Not a soul."

"Then don't. Don't let a whisper of it get out."

"I won't," promised Carlton. "But you'll see that nothing happens to Dan, won't you?" he added eagerly.

"Rest your infantile soul on that!" said Ned



angrily. "Now, you'd better go. I shouldn't want Gus to find you here. If he should ever hear that you have told me what you have, what do you suppose would happen to you?"

"Gus would——" The lad stopped with a shudder.

"Of course he would," said Ned sternly. "You mustn't let a word of this get out—not a word! Do you understand?"

"Yes," replied Carlton; "but I don't want anything to happen to Dan——"

"Didn't I tell you there wouldn't?" broke in Ned.

"Yes; but I'm afraid. My! if Dan couldn't pitch to-morrow and the Military Academy should beat us——"

"Go home and lock yourself in your room, for fear you'll let out something about this! I'll look after it. Don't you be afraid! If you've told me the truth——"

"I've told you just what I heard Gus say," broke in the little fellow.

"That's all right, Carlton," said Ned soothingly, as he saw the fear expressed on the face of his small visitor. "I'm glad you came straight to me. I'll look after it. Now, run along like a good little boy."

"I'm going," said Carlton, turning toward the door. Then facing Ned, he said tremblingly, "If Gus should find out that I'd told you——"



"He won't!"

"But if he should?"

"Don't be scared. We'll attend to Gus at the proper time."

"Maybe it won't be till after he has killed me."

"Don't you give up the ghost till you have to," said Ned to his frightened visitor. "Good night, Carlton. Don't forget to root your prettiest to-morrow when Dan strikes out the heavy hitters of the Military Academy. We may need every voice;" and Ned immediately sought Dan, whom he found alone in his room. "How are you, Dan?" he inquired as he seated himself in an easy chair and looked keenly at his friend. "Feeling fit for the game to-morrow?"

"My pedal extremities are a trifle chilly," said Dan good-naturedly.

"I'll risk them. That isn't what I'm afraid of."

"What has frightened you? The nine of the Military Academy?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I'm afraid for you, Dan."

"Afraid of me? Well, I don't know that I blame you. I'm almost afraid myself——"

"I didn't say I was afraid of you, Dan. I said I was afraid for you."

"What do you mean?"

"I've just heard of the dirtiest trick ever conceived by mortal man."



"What is it?" inquired Dan quietly, as he looked steadily into Ned's face.

"It's a trick to put you out of the game."

"What is it?"

"It's a scheme to feed you on ipecac just before the game begins."

"If I don't swallow it I sha'n't have any trouble, shall I?"

"No. But——"

"Who is to do the trick?"

"You can guess who is behind it. It's the lowest, meanest thing I ever heard of! If I really believed it all, I'd——"

"Don't you believe it?" broke in Dan.

"I don't know just what to think. I confess I'm afraid."

"You haven't told me just what it is that scares you."

Thus bidden, Ned, without mentioning any names, related what Carlton had reported to him. "What do you think, Dan?" he asked, when he had completed his story.

"I don't believe there's a fellow in the school who would be guilty of such a low trick!" said Dan positively. "I guess it's a false alarm. We're all nervous over the game."

"Maybe that's so," said Ned, his countenance brightening a little. "Still, it's better to be on the safe side," he added cautiously.

"What can be done?"



"You can be on your guard anyway."

"I might not eat or drink anything," suggested Dan with a smile. "Then I'd be safe anyway."

"And be in no condition for the game. No; I'll tell you what we'll do, Dan."

"What?"

"To-morrow we'll stick together after luncheon till the game is called."

"That won't be much of a hardship," said Dan lightly.

"No; but if both of us are on the lookout it won't be likely that anything can be done."

"All right. I'm agreed, though I haven't a bit of fear."

"I'm glad you haven't; I wish I were all clear in my mind too. But I'm not. We'll keep both eyes open, Dan. Hello!" he added; "here comes Walter and Smith and Gus Kiggins."

The three boys entered the room and at once the subject of the game on the following day became the topic of conversation. To Dan's surprise, both Walter and Gus appeared to be unusually friendly. Apparently all the feeling of jealousy which the latter openly had manifested toward Dan was gone and Walter glowingly predicted at least twelve strike-outs for his roommate.

"Of course we want to win this game," Walter said glibly. "If we can get those fellows scared, we'll have an advantage in the other five league games we'll have to play. Still, 'one swallow



doesn't make a summer,' and we'll not cry if this game goes against us."

"We aren't going to lose this game if every fellow backs up Dan," said Ned quietly.

"That's just what we're going to do," declared Smith.

"That's the idea," said Gus. "If every fellow doesn't do his level best, then we'll know the reason why. I guess Samson has given it to the nine straight. He says he's just a little afraid some one of us may put himself out of condition by eating or drinking something that won't agree with him. I never saw Samson so nervous as he is over this game. Next year he'll get his training table. He says the doctor has at last agreed. I think it will be a fine thing myself."

Dan glanced quietly at Ned while Gus was speaking and saw an expression on his face that caused the young pitcher to rise and say, "Well, it's time for me to go to bed. You fellows can go right on with your talk, but a good long sleep does more for me than all your patent methods put together."

"There goes the warning bell anyway," said Smith, as the chapel-bell rang out. "We'll all try Dan's cure for nerves." And the visitors at once departed from the room.

If Dan, in his heart, believed any reliance was to be placed on what Ned had said to him concerning the plot, he did not betray his fear in any way.



There was an air of only partly subdued excitement in the school the following morning, but if Dan was watchful not even Ned was aware of his friend's caution. The game was to be called at three o'clock. At luncheon-time Ned stopped at Dan's room and the two boys went together to the dining-hall.

"You see," said Ned lightly, "I'm sticking to you like a brother. I don't intend to let you get out of my sight one second between now and the game. I hope you'll appreciate my oversight."

"Glad to have you, though you'll have your trouble for your pains," replied Dan.

"I hope so," was all that Ned said in response.

The excitement of the morning was more manifest as the boys entered the dining-room. There were many glances of curiosity at the long table where the boys from the Military Academy were seated as the guests of the Tait School.

"A fine-looking team," said Gus Kiggins, as he seated himself beside Walter, whose place at the table was next to Dan's. Opposite them sat Ned and Smith and Hodge.

"They'll make us know we've been playing a game before we're done," said Hodge in response to the statement of Gus.

"You're right they will," joined in Smith. "Dan, we're all looking to you to uphold the honor of the school," he added, as he looked across the table at the school pitcher.



"Oh, say something nice to Dan," growled Walter. "He's got troubles enough of his own without rubbing it in. What's the matter, Dan?" he added; "you look pale. Anything wrong?"

"Not a thing," replied Dan with a smile. "I never went into a game feeling better in my life. If I don't do all that you want me to I sha'n't be able to charge it up to the way I feel."

"That's the way to talk!" growled Gus without looking up. "Say, fellows," he added, "I've ordered some apollinaris lemonade for the nine. Samson won't let us drink any water during the game, you know."

"You're all right, Gus!" exclaimed Hodge. "I hope you'll make an extra home run to-day."

The glasses were placed beside the plates, and as Ned looked keenly at Dan he shook his head slightly.

"I'll tell you what, fellows," said Smith, "I'm never superstitious except before a ball game. Let's all change glasses for luck."

"That's the idea!" joined in Ned with a sudden eagerness. "We'll all exchange. Here, Smith, you give yours to Hodge, I'll give you mine, and I'll take Hodge's."

"That's all nonsense," exclaimed Gus abruptly.

"'A little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men,'" spoke up Ned. "Try it, fellows. Can't do any harm anyway."

Dan laughingly had exchanged his glass for Walter's, though the latter was not aware of the



exchange, as at that moment he was looking back at the table where the opposing nine was seated.

"Have it your own way," said Ned, who had seen the exchange, which had been unnoticed by the others.

In a brief time the boys arose and passed out of the hall.

"Be down at the dressing-room at two sharp," he called as the boys separated after they had left the building.



## CHAPTER XXVI

## WALTER'S ILLNESS

DAN and Ned proceeded directly to the dressing-room, the former somewhat downcast and the latter more lively even than he was wont to be. "How do you feel?" he laughingly inquired of his friend as the two boys entered the room.

"I have felt better," replied Dan quietly.

"What's the trouble? Are your pedal extremities chilly?"

"I have not noticed anything of that kind."

"Afraid?"

"Not of the Military Academy nine, if that's what you mean."

"What then?"

"Where is Walter?" Dan abruptly asked.

"I haven't seen him since we left the dining-hall," replied Ned, glancing keenly at his friend as he spoke. "He'll be here all right. You don't need to worry about Walter, Dan."

"Honestly, Ned, do you think there was anything in that change of glasses? I'll own up that I've——"

"Anything in the lemonade?" broke in Ned hastily.

"You know what I mean."



"Yes, I guess I do," acknowledged Ned. "Of all the vile tricks I ever heard of, that is the worst; that is, if there really was anything in what Gus was doing. It doesn't seem possible that he or Walter could stoop to——"

"I'm waiting for Walter," interrupted Dan. "I'll know when he comes. If he had a hand in that——"

"What if he did? That's just one more reason for showing the fellows to-day that you can't be put out of the game that way."

"It isn't that."

"Then, what is it?"

"I can't make myself believe that Walter Borden would stoop to such a low-down trick. Why, only last summer he was one of the best fellows I ever saw. He was generous; he'd give away his last cent——"

"If it didn't cost him anything to do it."

"All the boys liked him. He was just a little bit cocksure that he could give us all points on the game, but he was straight and true as steel—at least I thought he was."

"Maybe it's all right yet. That was a slick thing you did."

"What did I do?"

"When you changed your glass for his."

"I'm sorry now that I did that."

"I don't see why you should be. If he's sick, it's his own fault. If he can't play on the nine to-day



I'll put Sam Ventnor at short. He's almost as good as Walter anyway. If Walter could play short just half as well as he thinks he can he'd get the fielding average of the league."

"I wish he'd come," said Dan.

"Don't worry. If he doesn't come it will be because he has been studying harder than he ever has in his life before."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Why, all I mean is that if he is taking a dose of his own medicine he will be the better off for it. If he isn't taking it, then you've nothing to worry about as far as I can see."

The dressing-room was well filled now, and it became difficult to carry on conversation. The excited boys were all striving to appear indifferent, but their attempts were not altogether successful. Neither Gus nor Walter had come and their absence was beginning to be noticed.

"What has become of Gus and Walter?" inquired Hodge as he drew on his shoes. "I never knew either of them to be late at a game."

"They'll show up," said Smith.

"Or down," suggested Ned.

"What's the difference?" asked Smith lightly.

"It's all one to me."

"There's a big difference."

"I don't see it."

"Well, suppose you should go into a hotel and ask the clerk for the price of rooms——"



"I've done that many a time. I was in the Gorton last Easter vacation——"

"What did he tell you?"

"Who—the clerk? He said they had rooms from two dollars up."

"Well, now suppose he had said, after he'd looked you over, that in your case the price of rooms would be two down. Would that make any difference, Smith?"

"Yes," laughed Smith. "I think it would. But I don't see——"

"Here comes Gus Kiggins!" broke in one of the nine. "Walter is his shadow, and he can't be very far away. Hello, Gus!" he added. "What made you late? Where's Walter?"

"He's sick," replied Gus gruffly as he began to don his suit.

"Sick!" exclaimed Hodge, as he and the other members of the nine crowded about Gus. "What's the matter with him?"

"Ask somebody who knows!" retorted Gus, as he looked angrily at Dan. "I can't tell you."

"Won't he be able to play?" asked Ned.

"That's more than I know. There wasn't anybody to stand by him, so I stayed with him in his room till just now. He has been vomiting and he's lying on his bed now. His face is as white as chalk." Gus glared at Dan while he was speaking, until the others also turned and looked questioningly at the young pitcher.



"Did Dan make him sick?"

"Ask him. He can tell you better than I can," growled Gus.

"Dan, did you do anything to him?" Ned asked quizzically as he turned to his friend.

"What could I do?" replied Dan, his face betraying his trouble.

"Did you send for a doctor?" asked Hodge of Gus.

"No. Walter wouldn't let me."

"Why not?" inquired Ned.

"He said he'd be all right in a little while."

"Probably something he ate," suggested Hodge.

"Or drank," said Ned in a low voice.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Gus, turning sharply to Ned.

"If you don't know, I can't explain. Come on, Dan," he added, turning to the pitcher. "Come on; we'll run up to the room and take a look at the poor chap."

"We'll be back by the time the rest of you are on the field. If we aren't, Samson will bat flies for you."

Abruptly departing from the dressing-room, Dan and Ned ran to the dormitory and in a brief time entered Walter's room. They found him standing beside the table and his pale face and general appearance at once betrayed his suffering.

"What's the trouble, Walter?" inquired Ned.  
"Are you sick?"



"Awfully," groaned Walter.

"Had the doctor?" continued Ned.

"I don't want any doctor."

"If you're sick you ought to have one."

"I'll be all right in a little while. I'll get into the game too, before it's ended!" he added savagely.

"You can't put me out in any such way as this!" The angry boy was looking directly at Dan as he spoke.

"You act as if you thought Dan was to blame," said Ned.

"Well, what if I do?" demanded Walter testily. "He knows whether or not he had anything to do with it."

"Yes, I guess we all know that without asking Dan," said Ned quietly. "We'll have to start the game, Walter, without you. If you feel better a little later——"

"Who's going to play short?" broke in Walter.

"I'll put Sam Ventnor in for a while."

"It's just a part of a trick to shut me out," declared Walter fiercely.

"Let me tell you what will be good for you," interrupted Ned in a low voice.

"Why don't you say it?" asked Walter sharply as Ned waited.

"Have you ever thought of trying ipecac?"

"Have I what?" Walter was staring at Ned, and to the two boys it almost seemed that his pallor deepened.



"Have you thought of trying ipecac?" repeated Ned soberly. "It's said to be good for some things as well as for others."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Think it over and perhaps you'll find out. If you don't, ask Gus Kiggins. He may be able to help you find out. If you feel better, Walter, come down to the field."

"Walter," inquired Dan, who had been silent throughout the conversation, "don't you want me to stay here with you?"

"And not pitch?" demanded Ned, aghast, as he turned to his friend.

"I guess Walter will be all right by the time I'm needed."

"No! I don't want you here!" almost shouted Walter. "I wish you never had been here! You've made trouble ever since you entered. I was a fool——"

"Don't say 'was,' say 'am,'" broke in Ned sharply. "That's a fine way to talk! You know what is the matter with you just as well as I do. And Gus Kiggins came down to the dressing-room talking in his charming way about somebody that had made you sick. Well, I guess somebody did give you a dose! It would have done you more good if he had doubled it. And you thought it was for Dan! Sometime, maybe, you'll know enough to know that the cat which a monkey uses to pull his chestnuts out of the fire gets his paws burned. It



would serve you right if I told the whole school about the dirty trick you and Gus planned to play on Dan. Now that you have a dose of your own medicine, you sit up here and whine and cry like a spanked baby."

"Come on, Ned, it's time for the game," broke in Dan as he grasped his friend by the arm. "Walter," he added, "you heard what Ned said, that if you feel up to the mark a little later, you are to come on down and he'll put you into the game. Come on, Ned!"

Almost reluctantly Ned turned and without another word departed from the room. At the door Dan glanced back at Walter who, speechless, was staring at his departing visitors. Aware that Ned was almost beside himself with rage, Dan led the way hastily down the stairs. As the boys turned toward the athletic field, Dan said: "Now, Ned, you are in no condition to say anything. Don't say a word about this to the boys."

"Why not?" demanded Ned fiercely. "It's the worst thing I ever heard of!"

"Don't say a word about it."

"I shall! I'll let the whole school know——"

"Not if I am to pitch," said Dan quietly.



## CHAPTER XXVII

## THE LEAGUE GAME

FOR a moment Ned stared blankly at his companion, and then said: "Dan, you certainly beat anything I ever saw or heard of. I don't know which is the bigger fool, you or——"

"Is it a bargain?" broke in Dan with a smile.

"Of course it is, if you say so. There isn't anything else to be said."

"All right then. Now forget all about it, Ned. We'll just go in to put the Military Academy nine where it belongs. You're sure of the signals?"

"I can put you easy on that score."

"I know it. Just look at the crowd," Dan added as the two boys obtained their first view of the assembly. "I never played before a crowd like that!"

"You don't mind?" asked Ned a little anxiously.

"I can tell you more about that a little later," replied Dan quietly.

"Go right in and begin to warm up. We haven't much time to spare."

Both boys at once went upon the field—Ned to make certain that his players were ready, while Dan ran to one side of the diamond, where he began



to pitch easily to Smith, who, for the time, was receiving the ball.

As Dan occasionally glanced at the spectators, he saw that almost numberless carriages and automobiles were in line on both sides. In front of them were men and boys close to the ropes. The seats in the grand stand were a solid mass of color. Indeed, seldom had the athletic field of the Tait School presented such a gay appearance as that which now greeted his eyes. If Dan was fearful, his manner did not betray his feeling; and when, after a brief delay, the umpires took their places and the Tait School nine, in accordance with the arrangement that the home team was to have the last inning, advanced to their positions in the field, no one apparently was more unconcerned than he. Sam Ventnor was short-stop in Walter's place. Gus Kiggins loomed large at first base, Ned was behind the bat, Hodge at third base, and Smith was in left field. The ball was being swiftly thrown from one baseman to another, but the eyes of the visitors were all centered upon Dan as he slowly advanced to the pitcher's box. The umpire signaled for the ball to be thrown him and as soon as he received it he slipped it into his pocket, tossed a new ball to Dan, and called sharply, "Play ball!"

The first game of the series in the new league was begun.

"Ball!" called the umpire as Dan sent the first ball swiftly to the outstretched hands of Ned.



"Two balls!" was the announcement which followed the young pitcher's second attempt.

"Three balls!" was the third call of the umpire, and a scattered cheer arose from the followers of the Military Academy nine.

"Steady, Dan," called Hodge from third base.

The pitcher slowly turned and glanced at the field. He saw that his companions were all somewhat nervous and there was a smile, whose meaning was plain, on the face of Gus Kiggins. If Dan shared in the prevailing feeling he did not manifest it by his actions. Deliberately he studied the batter, then drew back his arm and swiftly sent in the ball. Whether the speed of the little sphere or its puzzling curve misled the player or not Dan did not know, but it struck the batter full in the shoulder.

A shout arose from the spectators as the player, rubbing the wounded spot, started toward first base. "Up in the air!" "Got him going!" "Wild as a hawk!" were among the gleeful calls from the friends of the Military Academy. An expression of anxiety appeared on the faces of the supporters and even on those of the members of the nine of the Tait School. Dan, however, did not change his quiet manner. If he was disturbed by the unfortunate beginning, he did not show it. Apparently ignoring the dancing runner, he slowly faced the next batter and then suddenly and with terrific speed sent the ball to Gus Kiggins at first.

The baseman, perhaps caught unaware, dropped



the ball when the runner was at least two feet off the base. A shout like the sharp report of a pistol at the misplay arose from the academy contingent, and the nervousness of the school nine and its friends increased.

Ned advanced from his place behind the bat and holding his mask in his hand held a brief whispered conversation with Dan. The action of the catcher was greeted by another derisive shout which did not tend to soothe the feelings of the excited boys. Indeed, for a moment it almost seemed as if the entire body of spectators was in an uproar.

Dan settled back into his box and apparently ignoring the shouts and excitement sent in a swift straight ball at which the batter struck in an attempt to bunt. The ball rolled slowly to Dan, who pounced upon it in a flash, whirled about, and threw swiftly to the second-baseman. The ball was caught and then thrown to first, where Gus Kiggins caught it just before the runner touched the bag.

"Double play!" "That's the way to do it!" "We've got them started now!" "Two out and the third man as good as gone!" It was now time for the supporters of the Tait School to give vent to their feelings, and the many shouts and calls finally united in a prolonged school cheer.

Dan meanwhile was keenly watching the player who now advanced to the plate. A sturdy, solid, muscular fellow he appeared to be, and the call for a "home run," which was raised by several among



the friends of the academy nine, at once revealed to the young pitcher that he was facing one of the heaviest hitters of the opposing nine. He hesitated a moment, waited for Ned to repeat his signal for a swift low incurve, and then pitched the ball.

"Strike!" shouted the umpire.

"Strike two!" he called again when a swiftly pitched ball seemed suddenly to swerve from its course as it came near the plate and almost threaten the face of the batter.

Drawing back his arm and "winding up" his body as if he was striving to exert every ounce of power he possessed, Dan delivered the third ball. Instead of being a swift ball, however, it was slow, and its curve, as it crossed the plate, apparently was outward. The excited batter, however, in his zeal, struck viciously at what he confidently believed was to be an unusually swift ball and swung his bat before the little sphere had even reached the plate.

"You're out!" called the umpire.

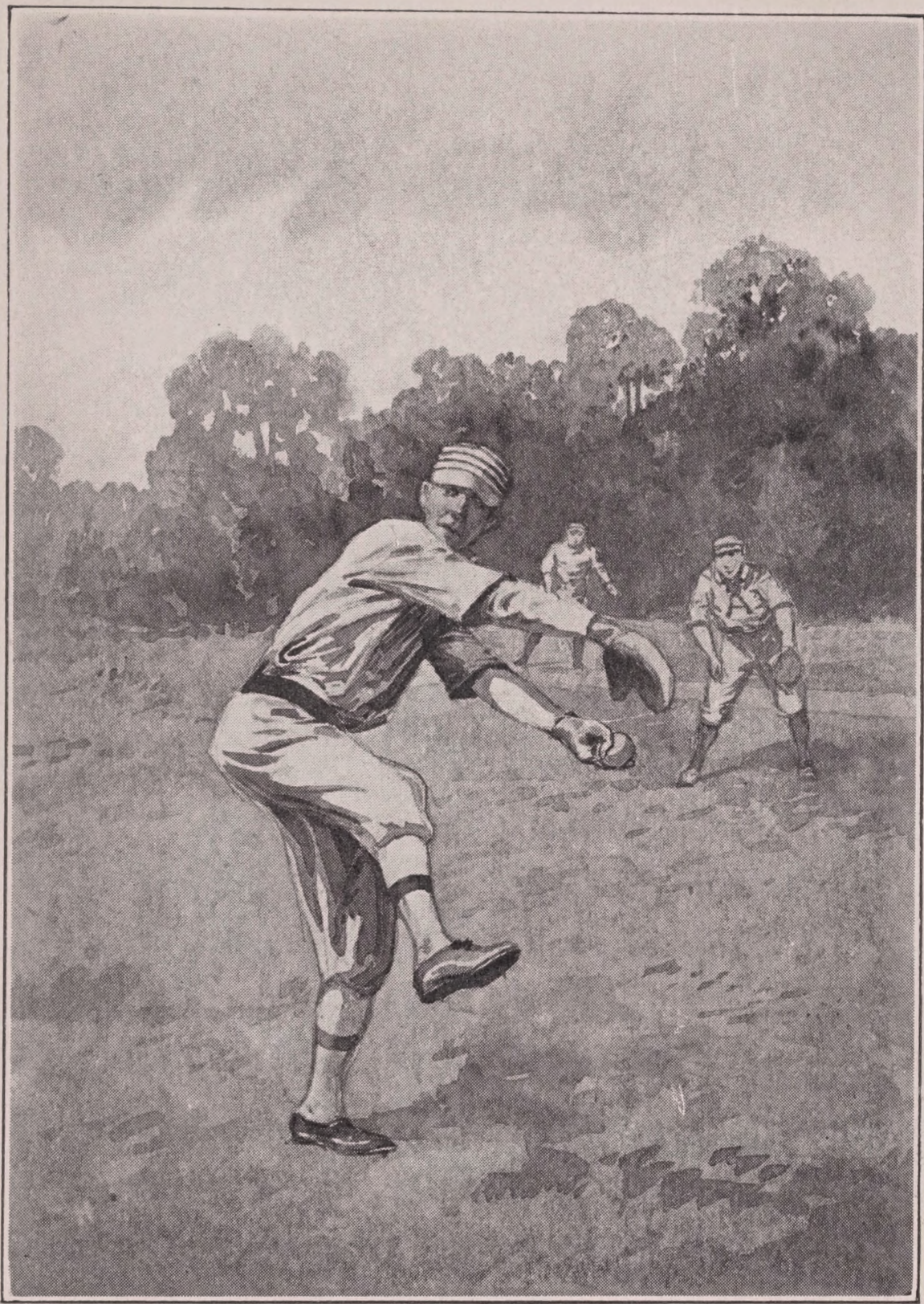
Disregarding the cheers of the spectators, the luckless batter waited for Dan to come in and then said to him good-naturedly, "You got me that time."

"I was lucky," responded Dan pleasantly.

"I wish I believed it was just 'luck.' Next time I'm up, I'll know a little more about it."

It was now that the Tait School nine was to show what it was able to do with the bat. Various reports had come as to the quality and ability of the battery of the academy nine, but, like Dan, the young pitcher





*“ The pitcher handled himself well ”*

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was a new boy, consequently no one was able to speak authoritatively. He assuredly was the one player whose actions were most keenly observed when the academy players took their first turn in the field. The pitcher was tall, wiry, and handled himself well in the preliminary practice.

"South-paw," muttered Ned as he watched Ingersoll, the pitcher of the academy nine.

"That'll be my finish then," said Hodge gloomily. "I can't hit a left-hander. It's like striking at the moon."

"Don't give up before you begin," said Ned sharply.

"Oh, I'm not a dead one yet," retorted Hodge, as he selected his bat and advanced, as the first batter, to face Ingersoll.

A hush fell over the entire assembly as the motions of the lanky pitcher were keenly watched by all observers. A laugh was heard as Ingersoll twisted his long arms and body almost as if he were trying to tie it into a knot. Suddenly from the squirming arms the ball shot forth and Hodge struck wildly at it, though he did not come within six inches of the little sphere.

"Strike!" shouted the umpire promptly.

"That fellow is going to wear himself out before the sixth inning if he keeps that up," said Ned to Dan as they were seated side by side on the players' bench. "He can't keep that up."

Dan, after his usual quiet manner, did not reply,



though he was keenly observant of his rival in the box as was his friend.

Another strike, then two balls, quickly followed Hodge's first attempt, and then the batter struck savagely at the ball that followed and sent it slowly rolling toward third base. The baseman easily stopped the ball, threw it to first, and Hodge was out.

"Next victim," muttered Ned as he stepped forward to the plate. Ned, however, was more fortunate than his predecessor, for after one strike and two balls had been called he lifted the little sphere for a safe hit over second base.

"Now, Gus, remember your country's need," said Smith, as Gus Kiggins' turn to bat came and the young giant stepped forward. "Don't forget that you're to make a sacrifice hit."

If the batter heard the direction he gave it no heed, for he sent the first ball pitched far over the head of the left-fielder. Almost on a straight line the ball sped on, rolling swiftly when at last it struck the ground, while both the left-fielder and the center-fielder of the academy ran in swift pursuit. Pandemonium almost seemed to break loose among the boys of the Tait School. They rose from their seats and swung their caps, dancing up and down in their excitement as they shouted and cheered wildly. The excitement became still greater when Gus turned third base and followed Ned toward the home-plate. The ball by this time had



been secured and the left-fielder had thrown it, exerting all his power, to the short-stop, who had run back to secure it.

There were now wild calls for Gus to increase his speed. Ned already had crossed the home-plate, but Gus was fifteen yards away. On and still on plunged the heavy hitter and the ball was in the hands of the academy short-stop. Ignoring the wild shouts of the dancing boys the player turned and threw swiftly to his catcher. The throw was accurately made and the ball was caught in the outstretched hands of the academy catcher when Gus was five feet away, but the runner did not hesitate. Throwing himself with all his weight against the waiting player the two boys fell together to the ground. Gus instantly arose, but the other player did not move. The ball had rolled from his hand, and a shout arose when it was learned that the run was to count. Silence, however, quickly followed the noisy demonstration when it was seen that the academy catcher did not rise. Several of his teammates ran to his assistance and as they lifted the player to a standing position the latter, in part regaining his breath, turned angrily to the umpire and said, "He fouled me! He struck me with his fist in the pit of my stomach!"

"I didn't see it," responded the umpire quietly.

"Well, he did!" repeated the catcher. "It was dirty ball!"

There were glances of anger turned upon Gus,



but the panting player apparently was unmindful of them all. He seated himself beside Dan on the bench and in a brief time the game was resumed.

The following batter struck out and Dan, who followed him, sent a short fly to second base, and the side was out.

In the next two innings neither side was able to score. Dan struck out two of the academy players in each inning and one was out on a high foul which Hodge caught. The first hit of the academy nine came in the third inning, when one of the players drove a sharply hit ball past first base, close to the foul line. In trying to stretch the well-placed hit into a two-base hit the runner was thrown out at second base.

On the other hand, the nine of the Tait School had not succeeded in scoring again. In the third inning two hits were made, one by Smith and one by Walter's substitute, Sam Ventnor, but both were held on bases when a double play was made by the short-stop and first-baseman, the former catching a fly well back in the field and recovering himself in time to catch Ned in an attempt to regain first, which he had secured by a base on balls, thereby filling the bases.

"Good work, old man," said Ned to Dan as the Tait School players started for their positions at the beginning of the fourth inning. "Keep it up and we'll shut out these fellows. We've a good lead." Dan smiled, for the words of praise were



vastly encouraging. He was confident that he had recovered from the nervousness he felt at the beginning of the game and, furthermore, he was now aware that the batters, as they faced him, betrayed in their manner the respect they had for his prowess. It was true that two runs did not permit any carelessness—the margin was too narrow. But he had found in preceding games that his power of endurance could be relied upon and that his work in the closing innings was never weaker than at the beginning.

“There comes Walter,” he said to Ned as he stopped and saw his roommate approaching. “I wonder if he is in shape to play? He has his uniform on, anyway.”

“I’ll see next inning,” said Captain Ned brusquely. “We seem to be getting on fairly well without him.”

“Give him a chance, Ned,” pleaded Dan. “I know how he feels.”

“I know how he ought to feel,” growled Ned. “I’ll see about him when we come in to bat again.”

Dan said no more and walked slowly toward the pitcher’s box. Already the infield players had taken their places and the ball was being passed swiftly from one to another. The noisy demonstrations of the spectators now had given place to a deeper, though more quiet, feeling of excitement. Every play was watched anxiously and in spite of the prevailing quiet Dan knew as well as the other



players that the shouts and cheers would break forth again at the first opportunity a hit or play might provide.

Dan was standing with his face toward third base watching the work of Hodge, who at that moment was throwing across the diamond to Gus, the latter quickly and swiftly returning the ball.

Suddenly Gus threw swiftly to Dan, who was unaware of the change. "Look out! Look out, Dan!" shouted Hodge warningly. But the word was not heard in time by the young pitcher. The ball which Gus had thrown with unusual swiftness struck Dan squarely on his right arm between the elbow and shoulder.

With a cry of pain Dan clasped the spot with his left hand and bending low almost fell to the ground.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

## THE END OF THE GAME

IN a brief time the confusion spread over the entire assembly. Ned ran to his friend and the players of both teams swarmed upon the field. Even the spectators shared in the prevailing excitement and were standing looking interestedly at the group which by this time had surrounded Dan.

Among the first to reach his side was Gus Kiggins. "Honestly, Dan, I didn't mean to do it," he said excitedly. "I thought you saw me! I'm sorry! I'm——"

"Get away, will you!" broke in Ned savagely. Thrusting aside the player who had been the cause of the trouble, Ned examined the arm which already was showing the effect of the blow. "Does it hurt much, Dan?" he inquired anxiously.

The young pitcher smiled faintly and did not reply, though the paleness of his face fully answered his friend's query.

"Let me rub it," suggested Hodge.

"Get some water—hot water," added Smith, every boy being anxious to do something for the relief of Dan.

"Can you go on with the game?" asked Ned.



"I'll try," answered Dan by an effort. "Let me see if I can throw." Taking the ball from the umpire's hand Dan swung his arm, but quickly dropped the ball. "No use," he said slowly. "My arm won't work."

The members of the nine glanced helplessly at one another and then glared at Gus, the source of all the trouble.

"I told you I didn't mean to do it," Gus growled. "I thought he saw me. We were all passing the ball——"

"Gus, do you think a dose of ipecac would help him?" said Ned in a low voice to his first-baseman. There was almost a glitter in the eyes of the young captain, he was so angry. Nor did his feeling find relief when Gus Kiggins growled, "What's the matter with you?" But he did not reply to the question.

The delay continued five minutes and then the game was resumed with Gus taking Dan's place in the pitcher's box, Walter going to short-stop, and Sam Ventnor playing first base. Dan, who was taken to the dressing-room to receive the attention of a physician, who was found among the spectators, in a brief time returned to the field and seated himself on the players' bench, there to watch the game in which he was to have no further part. The glances of sympathy which were given him as he had walked in front of the grand stand on his way to the bench had not soothed his feelings and to the



three substitute players who were sitting beside him he barely spoke in reply to their anxious questions.

"Does your arm hurt?" asked Snell, the first substitute.

"That's a fine question," answered Dan somewhat tartly. "What did you think? Would it make my pitching arm feel good to hit it with a ball?"

"Of course. I understand," said Snell lamely. "All I meant was to find out if you thought you'd get in the game again."

"Not this game. What's the score? How is it going?"

"The Military Academy fellows made a run last inning."

"This is the fifth inning."

"No. It's the sixth."

"How is Gus doing?"

"Pretty well. They're hitting him some, though. There! Look at that, will you!" Snell added abruptly. "A three-bagger!"

At the moment a shout that came almost with the sharpness of the report of a gun arose from the seats occupied by the friends of the academy nine. Two men were on bases when their heaviest hitter came to bat and when his long hit was made the two players before him raced home with their tallies.

"Dan, you'll have to go back to the pitcher's



box!" exclaimed Snell as the cheering of the opposing section was renewed when the runner on third came in with the third run of the inning, after the batter had sent a long fly to left field which Smith captured.

"I wish I could," said Dan quietly.

"You must. That makes the score four to two. We can't stand that. They're hammering Gus! They'll drive him out of the box."

"That doesn't look as if they would," suggested Dan as the next player struck out.

"Three in one inning," muttered Snell hopelessly.

"The game is young."

"If it is that bad when it's young, what will it be when it is older?"

"Better for us, I hope."

The school players came toward the bench, every one looking anxiously at Dan and eagerly inquiring concerning his hurt. The glances of anger at Gus when it became manifest that Dan was out of the present game were frequent and unmistakable. The substitute pitcher, however, apparently was giving slight heed to the looks of his comrades. His face was streaming with perspiration, while his jaws were working as if every second of time had its special value.

Between Gus and the other members of the nine sat Walter, his face still betraying the sickness he had suffered and his bearing showing that he was far from feeling at ease at the moment. He glanced



repeatedly at Dan, who was the center of a group, but he did not speak.

"Brace up, fellows!" said Ned anxiously as he faced his fellow players. "Now is the time to show the stuff you're made of! We mustn't let a little thing like a lead of three runs scare us. Do your best!"

The encouraging words of the young captain did not avail, however. The lanky Ingersoll seemed to have acquired an additional power in his wirelike arms and his body went through contortions that made his earlier efforts appear like child's play. Walter struck out. Sam Ventnor sent a little fly to the first-baseman. Gus Kiggins indeed made a hit, but it counted for nothing, as the batter that followed him was easily thrown out at first.

The Military Academy nine, however, did no better when their turn to bat came and neither of the following innings was productive of a run for either side.

"We've just got to do something now," said Ned desperately as he turned to his companions a moment before he advanced to the plate to begin the Tait School's half of the eighth inning.

"Set us a good example, Neddie boy," said Hodge encouragingly.

Ned's face was grim with determination as he faced the opposing pitcher. He was deliberate and cool and waited until two strikes and two balls had been called before he attempted to strike. Then



hitting savagely, he sent the ball on a low line far into center field.

It was now the turn of the Tait School to express its feelings in a long shout. The wild cries redoubled as Ned gained third and then with a burst of speed turned and raced for the home-plate. The ball was fielded well and now was in the hands of the second-baseman, but the nerve-racking strain was too great. In his attempt to throw quickly the ball went far over the head of the catcher and Ned was safe.

"Five to three! Five to three! Five to three!" came as a monotonous chant from the seats of the academy contingent. The cry could be heard above the wild shouts of the Tait School supporters, who still were shouting wildly over the hit and the run of their captain.

"Remember the example Ned set," said Smith as Hodge stepped forward with his bat. "Keep it up, you midget!"

The spectators were silent once more as all excitedly watched the batter. The powerful Hodge made a lunge at the first ball pitched and sent it just over the head of the third-baseman.

"A hit!" "You've got them on the run now!" "Keep it up! Keep it up!" were the rejoicing calls that greeted Gus as his turn to bat came.

This time the young giant for some reason was more responsive to his orders and instead of exerting all his strength he did his utmost to make a



sacrifice hit, but the ball rolled to second base, was hastily seized by the baseman, who touched his base, and then hurled the ball to first just in time to catch Gus.

“Double play!” “Two down!” “This fellow is easy!” roared some of the enthusiasts in the academy section. “Strike him out!” “Don’t let him hit it!” “Careful!” “Careful!” were among the encouraging words shouted to the tall pitcher.

Apparently Ingersoll responded to the appeal, for he struck out the next player and the side was out.

As all were aware that the incoming inning was the last for each nine, the excitement became more intense. When the Military Academy nine made a run the delight of their supporters became still greater, and though the confidence of the academy contingent was strong, nevertheless they were all anxious when the Tait School hitters came to bat for what was likely to be the last time in the game.

Every player was cautious now and if in his anxiety he did not become overanxious the score was not likely to be changed. Ned was slapping his players on the back and urging everyone to do his utmost. The last opportunity to score ought not to be lost.

“Up in the air!” shouted Smith, who was on the coaching line near first base when Walter, the first player to face Ingersoll, was given his base on balls. In his delight Smith leaned over and pulled grass with each hand as he continued his wild shouts.



The academy, however, responded vociferously when the next man struck out, and their shouts were prolonged and wilder when the following batter sent up a fly which was caught by the nimble player in right field.

"All over but the shouting!" called one hilarious supporter of the academy.

"Is it?" called Smith derisively, as the runner he was coaching started swiftly for second base, and out of the cloud of dust that was stirred up as he threw himself forward the decision "safe" was heard.

To the delight of the nine Walter boldly started, at the first ball pitched, for third base, and when it was seen that his steal had been successful the shouts and calls redoubled. A hit now would mean another run, and if the batter gained his base another run which would tie the score was not impossible. The wild calls died away a brief moment and then burst forth in redoubled power when the batter drove a sharp grounder between first and second and Walter made "home" with another run. The brief rejoicing hushed when Ned lifted a high fly into left field. The fielder first ran back, then turned and raced forward, and then stopped, awaiting the coming of the ball. A deathlike silence fell over the field and benches alike. Every face was turned toward the young fielder. Gus ran forward from the bench and crouched low as he watched the ball. Apparently it seemed to be falling slowly.



The fielder stood motionless. Suddenly he put up his hands and caught it. The nine of the Military Academy had won the first game of the interschool series by a score of five to four.

A noisy cheer greeted the catch and then in comparative silence the assembled spectators began to move from the seats toward the waiting automobiles and carriages. The crowd halted a moment to listen to the cheers which the victorious nine gave as they assembled and then to the cheers of the Tait School nine.

The latter stood close together, every player resting his hands on the shoulders of a teammate. The cheer rose with a great volume of sound, but in it there was to be detected something of the disappointment everyone felt. The game had been well played, but defeat was still defeat.

"Too bad, Ned," said Dan as his friend walked beside him. "We'll try to do better next time. It's early in the season yet, you know."

"How is your arm?" asked Ned abruptly.

"Sore."

"That's the way we all feel," snapped Ned. "If you had kept on we'd have won the game."

"That's something no man knows."

"It's what everybody here knows!"

"Never mind. Perhaps being beaten in the first game will make us all the better for the series. Isn't the Military Academy nine about the strongest in the league?"



"It isn't so strong as ours when you pitch. What do you think, Dan; did Gus do that on purpose?"

"He says he didn't."

"No one believes him."

Dan did not reply and at that moment Carlton Hall came running to the side of the young pitcher. "O Dan!" he exclaimed. "Wasn't it too bad? Didn't you see Gus Kiggins when he threw that ball?"

"It wouldn't have hit me if I had."

"Some of the fellows say he did it on purpose just the same as he tried to get you out of the game by making you sick beforehand."

"Who says so?" demanded Dan sharply. "You mustn't listen——"

Dan stopped abruptly as Walter and Gus at that moment joined the three boys. Had Carlton's words been heard? Dan was unable to determine from the expression on the face of the player who had taken his place in the pitcher's box. Even the thought, however, was forgotten in the words which Gus spoke.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ANGER OF THE NINE

**D**O you fellows believe I meant to hit Dan?" asked Gus, as he joined the boys and walked beside them on the way to the dressing-room.

"What makes you think we do?" asked Ned.

"Do you think I intended to hit you, Dan?" asked Gus, turning to the young pitcher.

"You did hit me," said Dan quietly.

"I know I did; but you can believe me or not, I didn't mean to. I'll own up that I threw the ball hard, but I thought, of course, you saw me."

As Dan did not reply, Ned said to Gus, "Have you any idea what made Walter sick?"

"Why do you ask me that?" retorted Gus.

"He seemed to be suffering from a peculiar trouble. He was deathly sick and then, in a little while, he was all right again. He put up a good game after he went in at short."

"Do you think I had anything to do with his being sick?"

"I didn't say you did. I just asked you if you knew what made him sick?"

"I suppose I'm to blame for that error Hodge made in the fifth inning too," said Gus gruffly. "If



anything goes wrong, then I'm the one to blame. I don't know why all the fellows are down on me. I pitched my prettiest after Dan was—after he gave out. I'm to blame for losing the game too, I suppose."

"We haven't 'blamed' you for anything, Gus," said Ned warmly. "You're getting away off the track. All I asked you was whether or not you could give a guess about what made Walter sick. You have switched off on to something else and haven't said a word about that."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Whatever you choose."

"I don't see why you suspect me of making Walter sick. What earthly reason would I have for wanting to get him out of the game?"

"Was there anyone you wanted to put out of the game?" Ned's face was flushed and, as he looked straight at Gus while speaking, the latter was unable entirely to conceal his uneasiness.

"Here comes Walter. Ask him if he thinks I tried to poison him," said Gus.

"Feeling better?" inquired Ned, as the short-stop walked beside him.

"I'm all right now," said Walter quietly.

"Walter," said Ned, "we were just asking Gus if he had any idea what it was that made you sick just before the game."

"Did he tell you?" inquired Walter, as he looked half angrily at Gus.



"He didn't say you had too much ipecac in the apollinaris."

"He didn't say what?" interrupted Walter aghast, staring first at Ned and then at Gus.

"He didn't say that you got the wrong glass, but——"

"I wish you'd say right out just what you've got to say," broke in Walter peevishly. "I'm not good at riddles."

"Oh," said Gus Kiggins with a growl, "the fellows are all down on me. First they say I tried to disable Dan's pitching arm; then they say Hodge's error in the fifth was my fault; then the reason why none of them could hit Ingersoll was because I'd fixed it up with him; and now they say I doctored your lemonade and made you sick. Give a dog a bad name——"

"Look here, Gus Kiggins!" broke in Ned with eyes flashing. "You know you're just talking to hear yourself talk. We happen to know about that ipecac."

"What about it?"

"You had it all fixed for Dan."

"Oh, I tried to make Dan sick too, did I?" said Gus in real or pretended scorn. "Next you'll have me down for trying to poison the whole school. Why should I want to play such a trick as that upon Dan? If you should accuse me of wanting to get Ingersoll out of the game——"

"No use, Gus," broke in Ned quietly.



"That's the worst of it. You condemn me without hearing a word."

"We have heard. We know all about the scheme you and Walter——"

"What 'scheme' are you talking about?" shouted Gus.

"Just what I'm telling you. Someone overheard you two talking it over and we decided that we'd just be ready for you."

"Who heard us?" demanded Gus.

"Never mind. Somebody heard you. That's enough, isn't it?"

"Why didn't we do it then?"

"It wasn't the fault of either of you that it didn't go through."

"What do you mean?"

"That lemonade had been fixed."

"Then why wasn't every fellow sick?"

"Because only one fellow was to be——"

"Who was that?"

"Dan."

"Why didn't he get sick then?"

"Because we let Walter have the glass intended for Dan."

"I'd like to know who put any such stuff as that into your heads!" said Gus savagely. "I'd show him——"

The angry young giant stopped abruptly as his eyes fell upon little Carlton Hall who, with great pride, was walking beside Dan. As the glance of



Gus fell upon him, Carlton slunk back in terror and clutched Dan by the arm.

"It might help to clear up matters a little if you would kindly explain how it was that Walter happened to be sick after he took the glass which was intended for Dan," said Ned bitterly.

"There isn't any use in my saying a word," declared Gus as he turned away. "You wouldn't believe me under oath."

"That's right!" said Smith, who had not known of the plot, and his surprise and anger were consequently greater.

Gus turned abruptly and for a moment the boys believed he was about to attack Smith, but if that was in his mind he evidently thought better of his purpose as he became aware of the unfriendly glances of all in the group.

"We haven't come to the end yet," called Ned as Gus departed.

The indignation of the boys increased as they entered the dressing-room and it might have fared ill with Gus if he had remained with his companions instead of proceeding directly to his own room.

"It's the worst I ever heard!" said Smith. "I knew that Gus was jealous of Dan, but I didn't believe even he would stoop to such a low-lived trick as to try to keep him out of the game by feeding him on ipecac! How did you find out about it anyway, Ned?"



"Somebody overheard the talk," answered Ned glancing at Walter, who had remained with the boys.

Not a word had Walter spoken since he entered the room. His face was colorless and his suffering was manifest to all, but the troubled boy, as he occasionally looked about him, saw only the expression of anger and disgust on every face. Dan too had been silent and his face betrayed an anxiety hardly less than that of Walter's. In a brief time the boys were dressed and departed.

As they came out of the building Carlton Hall, who had been waiting for Dan, rushed to the side of his friend and seizing his hand said in a low voice, "I'm afraid."

"What are you afraid of?" asked Dan with a smile.

"Gus Kiggins. When he started for his room he saw me and I thought he was going to strike me."

"Why didn't he?"

"I don't know. He stopped all at once and then went right on."

"He won't touch you."

"Yes, he will! I know he will! He'll kill me, because he thinks I was the one that heard him talking to Walter."

"Don't be scared. If he sees you acting in this way, then he may think you had something to do with it. Run along now and don't act as if you were frightened. He won't hurt you."



Carlton obediently departed, and Dan's heart, as he watched the little fellow, almost smote him. The boy had developed wonderfully during the school year, but he was a slight lad and not able as yet to fight his own battles. Then too, Dan had spoken more confidently than his real feelings had warranted. He was by no means certain that Gus would not wreak his vengeance upon the boy, who was unable to defend himself. And yet Gus had no knowledge that Carlton had been the informer, and the thought relieved his fear.

"How is your arm, Dan?" inquired Hodge as he joined his friend.

"Sore," replied Dan lightly.

"It's a wonder it wasn't broken. What a low-down, sneaking piece of business that was. Don't you think Gus did it on purpose?"

"No."

"You're too easy. All the fellows know that he had made up his mind that you shouldn't keep him out of the box. And he got the place too—worse luck! He made us lose the game."

"No one knows that."

"Everybody knows it!" retorted Hodge. "The low-lived sneak! I don't envy him when the school finds out about it. This place will be too hot for Gus Kiggins! It isn't the first time, either, that he has been up to his dirty tricks."

"What's the use, Hodge? If it is all true, why, I'm the one that had the worst of it——"



"When we lost the game?" broke in Hodge. "Not much! If we had won, Gus might have put on a bold face and carried his bluff through, but now he's a home boy as sure as you're born. Believe me, he won't stay around here long."

Dan would have been less than human if the words of praise and sympathy had not found a warm response in his heart. He had endured the taunts and flings of Gus Kiggins, aware in part that the boy was jealous of him. Seldom had anyone crossed the path of the school bully; those who were not afraid of him preferring to leave him to himself, while those who were afraid seldom disputed his claims. Even Dan, inexperienced as he was, had found that there was a measure of satisfaction in the thought that Gus had vented his anger upon him because he was jealous of the skill that had been shown. Dan knew that if he had displayed no ability in the pitcher's box, Gus would have ignored him. Among the few words Mr. Borden had spoken to Dan was one warning which had not been forgotten. "Don't forget," Mr. Borden had said, "that no man ever does well without somebody being envious of him. The true man understands that and does not let the petty jealousy of others trouble him."

Dan recalled the words now and the recollection helped him. He was in deep trouble as he thought of Walter. The boy, somehow, had come under the influence of Gus, until his life was poisoned. What



would Walter say now? How would he bear the feeling of the school, for there could be no doubt he would share with Gus the indignation all felt. These questions were in Dan's mind when he went up and found Walter alone in their room.



CHAPTER XXX

DAN'S STRUGGLE

THE two boys stood a moment looking at each other in silence. Walter was the first to speak and his voice trembled as he said:

"Dan, do you believe it?"

"I don't want to," replied Dan quietly.

"But do you?"

"Yes; at least, I believe a part."

"Which part?"

"That about the ipecac."

"What don't you believe?"

"That Gus Kiggins intended to hit me with the ball."

"Surely you don't think I had anything to do with that!"

"Of course I don't, Walter."

"Do you think I had anything to do with the ipecac?"

"You know better than I do about that."

"Do you?" said Walter persistently.

"I hate to believe it, Walter."

"That means you think I did."

As Dan was silent the troubled boy looked at his roommate in a manner that increased the



uneasiness of both. As Dan glanced out the window a moment he saw Carlton Hall running across the campus toward the dormitory, but he gave the little fellow no thought. He was troubled now by more serious matters than the trials of a boy in the fourth form.

"Dan," said Walter at last, "I'm the most miserable fellow in the Tait School."

"I'm sorry."

"It seems as if everything and everybody was against me. I don't know why it is that Gus got me into such things."

"Don't you?"

"No, I don't," said Walter irritably.

"Walter," said Dan quietly, "didn't you know what kind of a fellow Gus was when you began to run with him?"

"I thought all the fellows were down on him. He isn't as bad as some of them say he is."

"That's very likely so."

"But this thing is the worst——"

"What thing?"

"Oh, you know what I mean. This ipecac business."

"Why did Gus want to make me sick?"

"You know that too. He expected to be the pitcher of the nine. Everybody else expected him to be too. At first Gus was down on me for bringing you here, but he got over that. He had two plans going—one was to make you just sick enough



so that you couldn't play in the game with the academy or, if you did play, that you'd fall down and the fellows would have to call on him; and the other was to try to have the officers of the league bring a charge against you—that you were a professional—had been paid for playing.”

“How did Gus think he could do that?”

“He had a letter from that harness-maker at Rodman——”

“Who? Si?”

“Yes.”

“Well, he didn't say I was a professional, did he?”

“Not exactly; but his letter was a funny one. Even you would laugh if you should read it.”

“What did Si write?”

“A lot of stuff. He praised you to the skies and went on to say that every man, woman, and child in Rodman knew that you had had an offer to play on a professional team ‘for big money,’ as he put it. Of course his letter was worded in such a way that one might think you had been paid——”

“I understand,” said Dan shortly. “Did Gus write the letter?”

“Ye-es, though I'm afraid I helped,” said Walter slowly.

“How did Gus know about the harness-maker?”

“I'm afraid I told him that too,” said Walter wretchedly. “But the letter hasn't been used,” he added eagerly.



"How do you know it hasn't?"

"Why—you see—I thought—I thought I had the letter in my pocket!" exclaimed Walter aghast as, after feeling in every pocket, he failed to find the missive.

"Probably Gus has it or has had it and sent it on," said Dan.

"That isn't square, Dan!"

"Maybe it isn't. So Gus was holding back the letter until he had tried a dose of ipecac on me, was he?"

"That was the plan," faltered Walter.

"Well, Gus pitched to-day anyway. He ought to be satisfied."

"But he lost the game."

"Say the game was lost."

"It's all the same. Dan, there isn't any use in trying to mince matters. I can't say anything. You know I was mixed up in the matter and it served me right too when I got the glass with the ipecac in it. I'm all broken up, Dan. Do you think you ever can call it square?"

"Walter," began Dan soberly, "I want you to know——"

What it was that Dan desired to say was left unspoken for, at that moment, a loud piercing scream came from the hall below.

Without a word Dan darted from the room and, leaping down the stairway, came face to face with Gus Kiggins. The burly giant was holding



Carlton Hall by his left wrist and was twisting the arm of the little fellow in a way that had brought forth the screams of pain which had startled the two boys.

"You little sneak," Gus was saying to Carlton, "you will go and tell the fellows that I tried to make Dan sick, will you? I'll teach you! You'll get what you deserve if I have to——"

Gus stopped abruptly as Dan stood before him. "Let go of the little fellow," he ordered.

"I'll let him go just as soon as I have——"

"Let him go!" interrupted Dan in a low voice.

"I'll let him go!" shouted Gus as he abruptly released his grasp on Carlton and turned savagely upon Dan. "You're another! You're a fraud! You run around with your pious whine and try to do the 'good little boy' act! I've been aching to get a chance at you, you bean-fed, white-livered, country hypocrite!" Raising his fist he struck blindly at the boy before him.

Dan, who was cool, stepped nimbly to one side to avoid the blow and Gus lurched heavily forward. Before he could recover himself, little Carlton Hall suddenly flung himself forward and grasped the knees of the infuriated young giant. Gus staggered as he strove to free himself and as he released one foot he kicked viciously at the prostrate boy. Carlton's grasp relaxed and, with a groan, he fell upon the floor.

The sight of the white upturned face was more



than Dan could endure. Without a word he flung himself upon Gus, exerting himself to the utmost to thrust him out of the open door. Instantly Walter joined in the fray but, even with his aid, Dan was scarcely able to move the struggling giant.

How the contest would have ended he did not know, but at that moment Hodge and Ned entered the hall. For an instant they gazed in astonishment at the sight of the combatants and then the meaning of it all became clear. Without a word they seized Gus, and while one held his right arm and the other his left, the furious boy was speedily helpless, if not subdued, in their hands.

"Now then, Gus Kiggins, what have you got to say for yourself?" demanded Ned, as he looked into the face before him.

"You're all down on me. Nobody in the school gives me a fair show," whimpered Gus. Then, crazed by his rage, he suddenly exerted himself with all his strength and breaking away with an unexpected action ran swiftly to the door and fled from the building.

"He's gone," said Ned breathlessly.

Dan did not speak, but turning hastily to Carlton, who was still lying where he had fallen, he lifted the little fellow and said, "Are you hurt?"

"My side. He kicked me," whispered the boy.

Briefly Dan related to his friends what had occurred and with many exclamations of anger Ned assisted Dan to carry Carlton up to his room, where



an examination was made after Carlton had been placed on a bed.

"I don't believe he is badly hurt," said Hodge. "He had his wind knocked out of him by that hard kick; that seems to be about all."

"I'll go for a doctor," suggested Walter hastily. But Carlton himself protested so strongly that the plan was abandoned—at least for the present—and then the four boys seated themselves to talk over what had occurred and what was to be done.

"That fellow will leave to-night if he knows what is good for him!" said Ned angrily. "He's the worst I ever saw. Did he hurt your pitching arm any more?" he added, turning to Dan as he spoke.

"I don't know. I can't just tell," replied Dan.

"Do you think you can pitch next week?"

"I guess so."

"We'll be in a hole if you can't. Come on. We'll go over and get the doctor started on it right away."

"Hold on a minute, fellows," said Walter. "I've got something I want to say to you."

"Say it and be quick about it," replied Ned brusquely.

"I want to tell you all that I've been a chump."

"That's right, Walter, you certainly have," said Hodge brutally.

"I know it a good deal better than you do," continued Walter, his face betraying his deep feeling. "There isn't any use in my saying I'm sorry. I



don't see how I could have done it. If you fellows want to put somebody in my place at short, I'll agree to it. I'll agree to anything that you may suggest. From now on, I want to be fair."

"Don't say any more, Walter," interrupted Dan.

"Let him say it," protested Ned. "It'll do him good. When a fellow has let himself be made a fool of by such a chap as Gus Kiggins, he can't do any more——"

"That's right. He's said enough. We all understand."

"Do you call it off, Dan?" demanded Hodge.

"I most certainly do."

"Well, if you are agreed, I don't think there's much for the rest of us to say."

"Come on, Ned," suggested Dan uneasily. "I thought you wanted me to go over to the doctor's with you and get something for my arm."

"I do," said Ned, rising promptly. "We'll settle this later," he added, as he faced the boys.

"It's all settled now," said Dan quietly. "Everybody makes mistakes. I didn't know what a butter-plate was for when I came."

Walter's face flushed at Dan's words and his roommate hastily added, "Will you look after Carlton till I come back?"

"I don't want anybody to look after me," spoke up Carlton sturdily, "I'm all right."

"Good for you, kid!" laughed Hodge. "We'll make a man of you yet."



"I'll look after him, Dan, or do anything you want," said Walter humbly.

"Don't be too good, Walter," laughed Ned, who was as rejoiced as his companions over what had been said. "There's such a thing as being too good to be true, you know. Come on, Dan!"

When the two boys returned from the doctor's office, both were astounded by the report of the doings of Gus Kiggins—a report which Walter and Carlton were waiting to give them.



CHAPTER XXXI

THE FINAL GAME

WHAT do you think!" exclaimed Walter excitedly, "Gus Kiggins has left!"

"Left?" demanded Hodge. "What do you mean? Has he left school?"

"Yes. That's exactly what he has done. Packed up bag and baggage and left town on the evening train."

"Without a word?" asked Hodge, unable to conceal his surprise.

"Yes, sir; he's gone for good."

"How do you know?"

"He told me so himself. I went over to his room to tell him it was all off between him and me——"

"You went to his room?" broke in Dan.

"Yes, that's just what I did. After I found out that Carlton was not going to die——"

"I'm all right," interrupted Carlton sharply. The little fellow's face was still white and betrayed the pain he still was suffering, but the boy's determination was so manifest that the older boys in the room were quick to see and approve his newly found courage.



"That's the way to talk, kid," said Hodge encouragingly. "'Never say die.' You're learning to be something more than mamma's nice little boy. The Tait School will make a man of you yet." Then turning to Walter he added, "Go on with your merry tale."

"I didn't know at first," resumed Walter, "but that he was going to do me as he did Carlton, he was so nearly beside himself. When I told him I was done with him he was worse than ever. He said that was just like me, I'd be like the fellows I was with last and that Hodge and Ned and Dan had set me up to it." Walter steadily held to his story, though Dan at least was aware of the effort it cost the impulsive boy to relate what Gus had said. "He said," continued Walter, "that he wasn't going to see even the doctor, he was just going to leave, and the sooner he could get out the better it would be for everybody."

"I guess he was wise," laughed Hodge. "I'm glad he's gone."

"I did my best to calm him down," said Walter, "for I knew he'd be sorry by to-morrow. He wouldn't listen to a word I said, though, and now that he has really left I don't feel sorry. I'm sorry I let him make such a fool of me as he did. I can see it all now."

"Walter," said Ned more seriously, "did it ever occur to you that Gus Kiggins might have a successor?"



"I don't know what you mean," replied Walter, his face flushing as he spoke. "Who will be his successor? What kind will he be?"

"I'm not going to preach to you, Walter, for I don't know how, but I'm telling you that a fellow is always 'up against' some such proposition. If it isn't Gus Kiggins, then it's some other chap that can do his work."

"And you think when Gus's 'successor,' as you call him, comes along that I'll be following him just the way I did Gus?"

"I didn't say that."

"That is what you meant."

"Walter is all right," spoke up Dan quietly. "He's had his medicine——"

"You mean the ipecac?" interrupted Ned.

Even Walter joined in the laugh that followed, though his expression was not one of pure enjoyment.

"You know what I mean," continued Dan. "I had to learn what a butter-plate was for. It troubled me a good deal at first, but I got a lot of comfort out of the fact that every fellow had to learn something. If it wasn't butter-plates, then it was something else. Walter, here, had to learn to stand up——"

"I was in the history class the other day," piped in Carlton.

"Good for you, kid," retorted Hodge. "Glad to hear you were where you ought to be."



"I was there in a way," said Carlton. "Mr. Sutherland called on me to recite——"

"I sincerely trust you did yourself proud," suggested Hodge demurely.

"Oh, let the little fellow tell his story," protested Dan.

"Go ahead, kid," said Hodge good-naturedly.

"Mr. Sutherland asked me what were the five great races of mankind," related Carlton.

"That's dead easy," remarked Ned.

"Maybe it is easy for you fellows. I thought it was easy myself, but when I told him that the five great races were the hundred-yard dash, the two-hundred-and-twenty-yards, the four-forty, the half-mile run, and the mile he didn't seem to be a bit pleased with my answer. I'll leave it to you fellows if that isn't the truth. But Mr. Sutherland sent me out of the room."

A shout of delight came from the boys and whatever of feeling may have existed apparently disappeared.

"You surely are coming on," laughed Ned as he ruffled the little fellow's hair. "You'll be on the nine yet."

"Do you really think I ever will?" said Carlton eagerly.

"If you keep on this way you'll take Dan's place in the box."

"Speaking of the 'box'—who's going to take Dan's place now?" asked Walter.



"No one—we hope," replied Ned.

"Can he work next week?" asked Walter eagerly.

"The doctor man says he thinks so, at least he'll be good for a part of the game. The arm has a bad bump, but it'll be all right pretty soon."

"Great!" exclaimed Carlton excitedly, his face beaming with the worship of his hero. "Then we'll win the championship yet. There's another game with the Military Academy——"

"On their grounds," suggested Dan dryly.

"That won't make any difference—if your arm is all right."

"And our nine can hit enough to make a few runs," suggested Ned. "It's all well enough to have a good pitcher, but all he can do is to keep the other fellows from scoring. That doesn't win a game."

"It keeps the other nine from winning, doesn't it?" demanded Walter, now quick to come to the support of his roommate.

"I guess it does," laughed Ned, "but I'm telling you that we'll have to do better work with the bat than we did to-day if we are going to win out in the new league."

"We'll do it," said Walter confidently.

The confidence in a measure was shattered when the following Saturday it was found that Dan's arm had not entirely recovered. The departure of Gus Kiggins had been variously interpreted by the school, a few siding with him after he was gone, thereby



displaying the fact that a school world is not unlike the great world outside. However, while the great majority of the boys were not sorrowing over the departure of the bully, nevertheless the prevailing feeling of anxiety concerning the pitcher for the school nine, in case Dan was unable to play, was great. Indeed, when the game came and those in attendance saw that Dan was not in the box, there were many to prophesy that the high school would win.

At the end of the fourth inning the score was six to five against the Tait School. A great cheer arose when, in the following inning, Dan became the pitcher.

"Saving him," explained Carlton excitedly to Ben White, who was seated next him in the cheering section.

Whether Dan had been "saved" for this need or not, when he replaced Matteson, who had been called in from center field to do his best in the pitcher's box, the scoring of the high-school nine abruptly stopped and as the Tait School nine scored four more runs the game was won by a score of nine to six.

The return games in due course were also won by safe margins, but as the nine of the Military Academy had also won from one of the two schools and also had defeated the Tait School, the last-named nine was still tied for first place in the league. Indeed, as the series progressed it became



manifest that in reality the nines from the Military Academy and the Tait School far outclassed their rivals. The test between these two nines was to occur in the final game. If the academy should win, it could claim the championship by a game.

The excitement in the Tait School never had run higher than on that June day when the entire student body in a special train started for the academy grounds. Cheer leaders, leaders of the school songs, and various other functionaries had been selected, new cheers and new songs had been carefully rehearsed, and if loyal support would aid Dan and his fellow players, then the Tait School nine ought to win.

But the students of the Military Academy were equally well prepared to support their players, and song had been prepared to meet song and cheer to respond to cheer.

On the grounds were the students of the two other schools in the league, both hopeless now of victory, but warm in their support of the rival nines that were to play that day and about equally divided in their allegiance.

The scene was unlike any which Dan had ever beheld when he, with his companions, at last began their preliminary practice on the diamond. The stands were bright with color, and automobiles and carriages were several deep around the field. The sky was cloudless and the weather was intensely warm—a day when the players might do their best,



but also one in which the endurance of both the nines would be severely tested.

"Great day for the game," said Ned as he patted Dan on the shoulder when the latter took a ball in his hand and started toward one side of the field to "warm up."

"Yes, one of the finest I ever saw. Look at the crowd, Ned," added Dan as he glanced at the great gathering.

"Five thousand," responded Ned as he too scanned the crowded seats.

"Not so many as that," laughed Dan. "Enough, though."

"Make you nervous?"

"Not yet. Can't tell what the effect will be later."

"You're all right, Dan," said Ned cheerily, as he once more patted his friend on the shoulder. "You don't lose your head."

"I don't want to to-day——"

Dan stopped abruptly as a treble call, "Dan! Dan!" came from the bleachers not far away. Both Ned and the young pitcher glanced in the direction from which the hail had come and saw little Carlton Hall standing erect and waving his cap frantically as he called the name of his hero.

"What does he want?" said Ned. "Has he heard of more ipecac they're to feed you?"

"No," laughed Dan. "He just can't contain himself, that's all."





“ ‘ You’re all right, Dan ’ ”







When at last the game began people were standing several deep behind the seats. On the field back of the ropes the ground was covered with spectators almost as excited as the young players.

"Come here, Dan," called Ned as he beckoned to his pitcher. Near Ned were the two umpires and the captain of the academy nine.

"What do you think?" asked Ned. "The crowd is so big that the umpires suggest that a hit into it ought to count for only two bases."

"That's as fair for one side as the other," said Dan simply.

"All right, we'll agree," said Ned quickly. Before the game was ended, however, the captain of the Tait School nine bitterly regretted the assent which he so readily gave to the suggestion.

Dan now took his position and as he rubbed the ball in his mitt a final preliminary cheer came from the supporters of his nine. The young pitcher fancied that he could discern the shrill treble of little Carlton Hall in the midst of the shout. Waving his hand a moment as a token that he had heard he stepped into his box and delivered the first ball.

A shout went up from the friends of the academy as the ball struck the batter on the shoulder. Two or three of his mates gathered about him and rubbed the injured spot and then the player speedily took first base.

"Ball!" "Two balls!" "Strike!" "Three balls!" "Take your base!" called the umpire in



quick succession to the second batter who faced Dan. The shouting became a great roar as the runner on first moved to second base, while his successor took his place on first.

Two on bases and none out! The loud and continuous cheering changed to a wild incoherent cry of glee when the third player to face Dan sent a slow ball to Walter, which the usually reliable short-stop first fumbled; then started to throw to third base, but speedily changing his decision flung it to first base too late to catch the runner. Meanwhile the other two players had each advanced a base.

Three on bases and none out! The Tait School contingent was silent and dazed, but their rivals were more than atoning. People were standing, hats were being thrown in the air, and the deafening shouts were prolonged and continuous.



## CHAPTER XXXII

## CONCLUSION

DAN was motionless a moment as he stood facing the next batter, whom he knew to be the heaviest hitter on the opposing nine. It was plain too, that the crowd also was aware of this fact, for loud cheers for White rang out as the batter advanced to the plate. There were repeated appeals for a "home run" and for the player to "bring in everybody." Indeed, in the prevailing excitement, the call did not appear to be unreasonable. White showed plainly that he was prepared to do his utmost and a moment of weakness on the part of the pitcher would be fatal.

The wild shouts of the spectators sounded in Dan's ears as if they were far away. Even the treble cry that arose alone like a discordant note from the supporters of the Tait School was not heeded by the young pitcher. He removed his cap and wiped his forehead before he stepped into his box. He saw Ned's outstretched hands and read his sign for his best drop. Shaking his head as a sign that he understood, Dan glanced at the men on bases. The runner on second was far from his base and with his arms hanging loose was moving



up and down the line as if he were a jumping-jack or a figure strung on wires. The runner on first started as if he were about to speed toward second. Dan responded by a quick throw to first, which just failed to catch the nimble runner as he safely regained his base and immediately began to repeat his tactics when Dan again prepared to pitch.

This time Dan was not to be diverted, and he smiled grimly when the umpire called a strike. His smile deepened when the batter struck viciously at the next ball and sent a foul far behind Ned. Two strikes! The Tait School contingent seemed to regain a brief moment of hope and sent up a cheer. When White was called out on strikes as the next ball sped past him, a sharp yell, almost like the report of a pistol, broke from the excited schoolboys and the protests of the chagrined batter as he turned upon the umpire were speedily checked by the calls of the assembly to "Play ball! Play ball!" Three men were still on bases and there was only one out.

Again a batter faced Dan and the latter was quick to see that the player before him was not only nervous but timid. Suddenly exerting all his strength the young pitcher sent the ball with terrific speed across the plate.

"Strike!" called the umpire promptly.

Responding to Ned's signal for a quick repetition Dan again shot the ball straight across the plate and the batter, not fully prepared for the swift delivery, struck too late.



“Strike two!” called the umpire.

A “ball” and a foul followed in quick succession and then Dan signaled that his favorite ball was to follow. Lifting high his arms as if he were striving to gain every ounce of strength he possessed he sent in the ball in the midst of a silence that was most eloquent of the deep feeling of the assembly.

The batter, with every nerve tense, braced himself and swung heavily upon what he believed was to be another swift ball. So completely was he deceived by Dan’s delivery that he struck before the ball reached him—a ball that rose slowly into the air, then almost seemed to stop and hesitate as it neared the plate, and then with a sudden drop shot in toward the batter.

“Three strikes! Striker out!” called the umpire sharply.

The cheers now were almost as deafening from the supporters of the Tait School nine as they were from their opponents. Three men still were on the bases, but two batters had struck out in quick succession. Everything now depended upon the next player to face Dan. Even a single hit would mean two runs. If Dan could only strike out the fellow his work would stand almost alone in the history of the school. Every boy was now watching the young pitcher. Was he nervous? The wild antics of the men on the bases redoubled. The runner on second took an additional lead and acted as if still more wires had been strung for him.



But Dan was not to be diverted. He was deeply aroused, for he understood better than anyone the test that was upon him. He resumed his position in the box, once more looked at the runners, then ignoring their antics sent the ball in. A report like the crack of a falling branch followed and a wild shout went up as the ball was batted far back into the crowd along the left-field line. The applause instantly died away when it was seen that it was a foul. Ned slapped his hands together as he stooped to face Dan again. A "ball," "two balls," were then called and the wild roar from the assembly was of the mingled appeals of the rival factions. "A hit!" "Strike him out!" "Don't let him get his base!" were among the frantic appeals of the excited spectators. Dan was unusually deliberate now. He looked long at the batter as if once more he was endeavoring to ascertain just what his weakness might be. Ned gave the signal for one of Dan's swiftest low inshoots. The young pitcher nodded his head as a token that he understood. Drawing back his arm he delivered the ball as Ned had called for it.

"Three balls!" shouted the umpire promptly. People were standing on the benches now, apparently the excitement having passed all control. Parasols and banners were waving, as well as hats and arms. A scene of almost indescribable confusion was everywhere manifest.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire.



The noise of the assembly instantly subsided, as every spectator now watched Dan. "This ball will tell the story," was the word heard in low tones on every side of the field.

Once more Ned gave the signal for Dan's deceptive slow ball. Dan agreed and became still more deliberate in his movements. Amidst the profound silence that had settled over the field he again turned slowly and gave the signal for his players to move a little farther in. Ignoring the clapping of hands and the renewed antics of the men on the bases he slowly raised his hands far above his head, turned swiftly about, and sent in the decisive ball. To all appearances he had used every muscle in his lithe body to give speed to the little sphere, but once more the ball rose slowly, then again almost seemed to stop as if to tantalize the batter and shot in swiftly toward the player, who had lunged heavily and almost swung himself about in his determination to hit.

Before the umpire could be heard everyone in the great crowd knew the man was out and that Dan had performed the almost impossible feat of striking out three men in succession when the bases were filled. But if appearances were the measure, Dan Richards in his quiet way was the least concerned of all as, ignoring the cheers of the entire assembly, he walked to the bench.

The Tait School nine, however, failed in their turn at the bat to do any better or even as well as



their opponents had done. The first two players ignominiously struck out and Dan, in spite of the loud cheers that greeted him when he walked to the plate, sent a slowly rolling grounder toward first base, which the baseman easily secured and touched out the runner on the line.

Indeed, neither side succeeded in scoring until the fifth inning. In the four preceding innings the Tait School boys had made three scattered hits, not one of which placed a man beyond second base. On the Military Academy side White, the heaviest hitter, the second time he came to bat, sent a long liner over Smith's head in the outfield, but by a great throw the runner was held on third and left there when the next batter struck out and retired the side.

The noisy demonstrations of the crowd largely ceased as the game proceeded. The boys were playing a wonderful game for schoolboys and the opposing pitchers were doing marvelous work. Dan had struck out seven and his opponent five when the fifth inning began.

Walter, the first batter, was struck on the elbow by a pitched ball. For a moment the pain was almost unbearable and the lad twisted and writhed in his suffering, but pluckily refusing to have anyone run for him he proceeded to his base. On the first ball pitched he started swiftly for second base and as he threw himself forward and slid to the bag a cloud of dust arose that for a moment almost



blinded him. Instantly hearing the coaches call him to third he arose and dashed for the base not knowing where the ball was or what had occurred. Again sliding as he drew near the third-baseman, who was standing with outstretched hands he gained the place in safety before the ball, which had been thrown over the head of the second-baseman, was returned to third. As Walter was the fleetest runner on his nine, the chances seemed good to the friends of the school that a run would be secured, as only one was out.

When Streater sent a ball between short-stop and third base Walter dashed home with his run, while Streater started swiftly to second, but was thrown out by the catcher. The next batter was retired on a short infield fly, but the school nine had secured one run and was leading.

Another run was secured in the following inning by a hit which was followed by a long drive into right field by Ned, but he himself was left on third. At the beginning of the eighth inning the score stood two to nothing and the Tait School nine were beginning to be looked upon as the winners of the game.

In that inning, however, a base on balls, a hit, and an error by Hodge placed two of the academy players on bases and as they quickly attempted a double steal, Ned threw swiftly to Hodge on third base. A groan arose from the supporters of the nine when the ball went far over Hodge's head and



before he had raced back and secured it both players had run home and the score was tied!

Again pandemonium seemed to reign among the spectators. Every play and every player was wildly cheered, but both nines failed to score in the ninth inning. The tenth and eleventh innings also failed to produce a run for either side. In the twelfth, however, Walter made a hit and again stole second. Ned came to bat with sturdy determination to do or die. The first ball proved to be a strike, then a ball and a strike quickly followed. The next ball he struck with all his might and sent it swiftly down the line directly over third base and before the ball was sent in from left field Walter raced home with another run.

By one consent the spectators rose as the academy nine came to bat in the twelfth inning. Every player was tense and all realized how much depended upon the efforts of everyone.

A shrill cry of delight when the first man struck out was followed by a groan when the short fly of the next batter was squarely muffed by Streater. The runner started for second on the first ball pitched, but when Ned's throw was easily caught and the runner was out a renewed shout of glee went up. When the next batter at last struck out there was a wild scene. Boys and men rushed upon the field and singing, shouting, dancing in their excitement, started for Dan. The young pitcher, however, had fled for the dressing-room and was



nowhere to be seen. It was enough that the game and the championship had been won.

The following day the nine met to elect a captain for the following year. When Ned called the meeting to order and declared nominations to be in order, there was only one name presented—that of Dan Richards.

Slowly rising in his seat, Dan said quietly: "I thank you, fellows, for the honor you have given me. I didn't want you to do it. I've got enough to do to try to do my work in the box without the other. If you are willing I'd rather have you leave me free. I think Walter would make a good captain. He made two of the three runs in the last game——"

A storm of protests arose, which were led by Walter, himself, but all that Dan would agree to was to wait until fall before he would definitely decide.

The day after the closing of the school Dan and Walter were seated together in the train that was swiftly carrying them to Rodman.

"Walter," said Dan slowly, when at last the two boys were near their destination, "I'm not very much of a talker. I never have said much to you about what you have done for me——"

"Don't say a word, Dan," broke in Walter, his face flushing. "You're not the one to talk."

"Who is, then?"

"I am."



"You!"

"Yes, sir. When I think what a fool I've been and how I treated you——"

"Don't say any more," interrupted Dan.

"Yes, I will say more," protested Walter. "All the while I was chasing around with Gus Kiggins, I knew I was a fool. I never believed I could do it, but I did and there's no use in trying to deny it."

"You didn't do anything to me."

"Then it wasn't because I didn't try. But I've got a new start now. I wrote my father so the other day. I told him too, all about you and that if it hadn't been for you I'd have gone all the way with Gus."

"For me? Why, I haven't done anything."

"You didn't do so much, Dan. It was what you were that made me feel like a goat all the time."

Dan was silent a moment before he said quietly: "It has been the greatest year of my life. I can't understand, though, why all the fellows have treated me as they have."

"Can't you?" laughed Walter. "Well, I can. Say, Dan, that new league is a great success, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Wait till we get the track and the football going, as we shall next year! You're going in for the eleven, aren't you?"

"Samson wants me to."

"So do we all. It will be greater next year than



it was this, though I hope never to see another such game as that with the academy nine. You struck out fifteen."

"There's Si waiting for us on the platform," suddenly suggested Dan, as the boys obtained a glimpse of the Rodman station.

"Do you suppose he has heard of that game, Dan?" laughed Walter.

"We'll soon know," replied Dan with a smile as he stepped out upon the platform, where the outstretched hand of the harness-maker grasped his first of all.

"I say, Dan," demanded Silas, "I hear ye beat 'em all."

"Did you?"

"Yes, sir, I did! Have the New Yorks said anything to you yet?"

"Not yet," laughed Dan.

"Wait till you hear of what Dan does next year," suggested Walter.

THE END











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